

A PERFECT LOVE.—See page 429.

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1711.—VOL. LXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 15, 1896.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"WELL," SAID GERTRUDE, HAUGHTILY, "I HAVE NO WISH TO DIVE INTO YOUR PRIVATE AFFAIRS."

HORACE LANGFORD'S TREACHERY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

He was a fine fellow, was Horace Langford, only son of James Langford, Esq., of "The Dells," Hertfordshire; but as his enemies avowed, and his friends after a time were bound to admit, he was like a copper kettle, very bright outside, and very hollow within.

His dark silky moustache covered a mouth from which would issue simultaneously the greatest falsehood and the sweetest nothings that ever tongue could betray, whilst his dark hazel eyes were the only feature in his face which would not hide his feelings. Try as he would to control them otherwise it was of no use; when he wanted them to look grave they would invariably laugh, and when he would have given

the world to appear gay those tell-tale eyes would almost melt in their sockets.

Wherever he went his witty humour and cheerful manners made him a general favourite; and although there was a whisper abroad—a story not very creditable to those most closely concerned—no one believed it, and Horace was as much admired and as much courted as though no hint of his having done a dishonourable action had ever been heard.

But still an occasional breath would, as it were, fan the smouldering flame; and then it was said that one night there was a stormy scene between father and son, when the latter left the "Dells," banging the heavy door behind him. But the old man repented of his harshness long before the echo of that bang had resounded through the house, and ere a fortnight had elapsed Horace was home again, and the scene of that night apparently forgotten.

Four years have elapsed since then, and at the time our tale opens father and son are

seated by an open window, enjoying the cool breeze after the heat of a sultry August day.

"Well, father," said the latter, as he watched the smoke gracefully curl from the cigar he had in his mouth, "so you have let Myrtle Villa at last!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Langford, "and if references can be depended on I think I have secured a very good tenant."

"And the name?" queried the young man.

"Mrs. Hazlewood," was the reply. "She is the widow of a rich Indian planter, who has not long been dead, when she as soon as practicable returned to her native country, bringing with her her only daughter, a young lady of eighteen summers, with rupees sufficient to pave half Hertford."

"An ugly as sin, and as dark as Satan, I'll bet," said Horace.

"Then you'll lose, sir," responded his father. "The mother, well, never mind the mother," he continued, as if he thought in her case maybe his son was right, "but the daughter is as lovely

a girl as ever I wish to see, and, far from being dark, she is a blonde of the purest type, as fair as though a ray of Indian sun had never touched her cheek."

Horace took the cigar from his mouth, evaporating the smoke in all kinds of fantastic forms, as he listened to his father's eulogies on Miss Hazlewood's charms, those tell-tale eyes assuming a dreamy, faraway look, as if in the distance they were gazing on a face, maybe as fair as that of the Indian beauty.

"They are expected to take possession on the 29th of next month," continued the old gentleman, "and I have given my agent instructions to see that everything is in readiness, and I have no doubt we shall find them very nice neighbours."

Horace heard all his father had to say, and after entering into all matters concerning what should be done, and what should not be done for his new tenants, rose, threw away the cigar he had been smoking, previous to lighting a fresh one, and saying he was going to stretch his legs, walked from the window to the flower garden, on to which it opened.

He sauntered from the garden to the grounds, which, from their undulating nature, had gained it the name of "The Delis." There was no sound but the rustle of the leaves, and the occasional whirling of a bat, as it passed to and fro in the summer night air.

"I'll wager my father has some scheme in his head," thought Horace. "Miss Hazlewood, a beauty and an heiress, to be sought, wooed, and won by my humble self. Well, we shall see, governor, but I think not!" and in the stillness of the evening a sigh was heard to escape his lips.

Just then a rustle in the adjoining shrubbery and the sound of heavy boots crushing down underwood caused him to start; and as a man with a shaggy red beard and unkempt hair of the same hue made his appearance, a frown passed over the features of the other.

"You bore again, and at this hour," said Horace, as the owner of the beard and hair emerged from the thicket.

"Well, 'tis late, I'll own, Mr. Orace, and you don't seem mighty glad to see an old pal, but 'tain't no fault of mine; you were so long afore you came bout, but business is business, and when dooty calls Mr. Joseph Binks obeys," and the new comer assumed an air of deferential servility.

"Have done with your fooling," cried Horace, angrily; "and say what you want. I suppose money; take it and begone," and he drew two notes from his pocket, and handed them to him.

"Right you are, my boy," replied the other, and as he took the notes he shook, pulled, and raised them up to the moonlight, as though to test their genuineness.

"They'll do," he said, when he had brought his investigation to a close. "Two more to match 'em, and I'm off."

"They are all I have," answered Horace.

"No, are they though!" said the man, with an insolent grin as he looked into the other's face. "Now yer knows it's of no use whatsoever a tryin' it on with Jos Binks. Ye're a tellin' a lie, and yer know it. I came 'ere for twenty pound, and twenty pound I'll ave, Mr. Orace. Doy'er think I've known ye from a kid, and can't tell when yer speaks the truth!"

The grin had passed from the man's face, and it was livid with rage, as he continued, "Give us the tin, and let's 'ook it."

"I'll give you the ten sovereigns, but can do no more for at least six months," said Horace, as he paid the gold into the other's hand, that individual biting each in succession before transferring them to the pocket of his corduroy.

Having satisfied himself as to their value he was about to leave, when a sudden thought struck him; and diving his dirty hand into the pocket of his dirtier coat, he brought out a note, if possible, the dirtiest of the three.

"Ere," he said, "I'd almost forgot it," and thrusting it into Horace's hand, bowed again a mock salutation and vanished.

Glad to be removed from his hated presence,

Horace soon divested the note he had handed him of its covering.

It was too dark to read, but he could feel a card enclosed, which by the faint light of the moon he could see was a photograph, just visible enough to tell him who it was; and pressing a kiss on the inanimate face, he placed it with the note in his breast, and retraced his steps to the room where he had left his father sitting.

The lamps were lighted on his return, and only a short time elapsed before the old gentleman said he should retire for the night.

Left alone, Horace anxiously drew the letter from his bosom; it was beautifully scented with the tobacco in Joe's inner pocket, but he read and reread it, unheeding the scent it had contracted during its transit.

And the portrait, it was that of a girl whose sad eyes seemed even in the picture to gaze so lovingly into his, and the lips to pout for the kiss he gave.

He looked at the back.

"Come, darling, I am dying! Ethel."

"And that brute not to tell me," he said, as again he took up the letter. It was dated some time back, the writing on the portrait was fresh.

"Oh! my darling, my darling!" he cried, and, burying his face in his hands, wept like a child.

Mr. Langford was greatly surprised the next morning on learning that his son had left for London by an early train, leaving a note behind him to say that urgent business had called him to town, but he would be back in a day or two.

The 29th duly arrived, and with it two huge vans, loaded with new and costly furniture, which drove up to Myrtle Villa; and for several days previous to the arrival of Mrs. and Miss Hazlewood workmen were busily engaged nailing down carpets, hanging curtains and pictures, and with the assistance of two or three maid-servants, under the superintendence of a man from a great London establishment, the house was being perfectly arranged for the reception of its mistress.

The surrounding neighbourhood was in the greatest excitement. Myrtle Villa had been a very long time unoccupied, owing to its late mistress having been found dead in her bed under suspicious circumstances.

Whether it was feared her spirit would return nightly to investigate the cause of its being so suddenly banished from its earthly tenement, or whether new comers had an idea the same fate might await them, cannot be said; but "To let" appeared year after year in the windows, and the house on the agent's books.

The servants, like the furniture, were all sent from the metropolis, a charwoman, who was engaged to do all the scrubbing and hard work, alone coming from the neighbourhood.

"The 'ouse has been some time unoccupied, 'as it not, Mrs. Charlton?" asked the housemaid, who was assisting that lady in arranging what was to be Mrs. Hazlewood's bedroom.

"Lor' yes, miss," replied Mrs. Charlton. "And, poor as I am, I wouldn't sleep in it for a pension!"

"Why, for goodness sake!" asked the housemaid, beginning to be alarmed. "Surely it is not 'aunted!' and as the idea of nightly visitants and clanking chains passed through her mind she shivered at the thought.

"Well, they do say," replied the charwoman, "that the old lady's spirit has never rested since that night, when in the morning they found her dead in her bed; but, lor' miss, I shouldn't go for to frighten myself!" she continued, as the girl's face turned white with fear. "The doctor said it was heart disease, and the story goes—but, there, I'd better not tell you."

"Oh! yes, do, Mrs. Charlton!" said the other, as her fear partly quieted by the last assertion, she put down her duster in expectation.

"Well, then," began the woman, "you must know Mrs. Bliss (and a nice blissful creature she was, the cantankerous old wretch!) had a daughter, as pretty a young lady as ever eyes fell on. Well, there were only them two as lived at Myrtle Villa, till one day a cousin of the old lady's comes from some out-of-the-way place, as

rich as he was ugly, and he hadn't been there long afore it got about he was a agoin' to marry Miss Bliss, and all the neighbours cried shame on the old woman for selling her daughter to a man old enough to be her father, for they saw how pale and sad she had grown since he came to stay there. Howsomer, preparations were being made for the wedding: such dresses, such jewels as must ha' cost a mint of money! But, lor' bless ye! the young lady didn't even look on 'em. She told her mother she'd never wear 'em, and she never did."

"What did she do?" asked the housemaid, all interest, as Mrs. Charlton paused in her narrative.

"Why, when the wedding-day came she was gone. The bridegroom, mad with rage, had a fearful row with the old woman, and the night he left the villa she was found dead, and he has never been heard of since."

"And what about the young lady?"

"They says as how she ran away; but there, there's all these things to put to rights, and we a-gossiping as if the family wasn't expected for another month;" saying which Mrs. Charlton bustled out of the room to fetch fresh water, leaving the girl thinking over the story of Myrtle Villa.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh! mamma, do shut the window, it is so cold!" and Gertrude Hazlewood drew nearer to the fire burning in the bright grate, although the warm October sun pervaded the apartment. "I hate England, don't you, Fido!" and she passed her white hand over the silky coat of a King Charles spaniel as he lay curled up in her lap.

Scarcely a week had elapsed since she and her mother had entered the Villa; but although all was done that human power, unlimited wealth, and good taste could do to add luxury to comfort, the spoiled beauty was not content.

She hated England. The cold east winds were death to her, and wherever she turned there was nothing to note the oriental splendour of her tropical home. She was a tall, fragile girl, whose supple figure was perfect in its proportions. A faint rose that relieved the clear whiteness of her complexion, whilst her eyes of liquid blue, over which the lids with their deep fringes would lazily droop, were alone rivalled by her mouth, whose cherry lips would, when open, display her teeth as a row of pearls within.

A tropical sun had not been so generous in its treatment of Mrs. Hazlewood. Her skin had assumed a yellow tinge, which added several years to her real age. She had known much trouble in her day, and her only study now, her only thought, was for the happiness of her daughter.

She closed the window, and approaching the fire stroked the golden head of her child as she nestled her close to her side.

"And so you don't like England, darling?"

"Like it, mamma!" said the beauty, fretfully.

"I hate it! It was bad enough in London, where July was as cold as December one day, and as hot as the tropics another; and here it is ten times worse! If one gets the sun the wind is enough to cut you in two; and if one does not get that it rains as though a second deluge was at hand!"

A neat parlourmaid now entered, bearing a tray, on which was a miniature tea service.

The girl placed it on the table, but still lingered as if in hesitation what to do next.

"That will do, Mary; you can go," said her mistress.

"Oh! if you please, ma'am," she said, as she began twisting the corners of her spotless white apron, "I should like to leave when my month is up."

"You should like to leave!" ejaculated Mrs. Hazlewood, in her astonishment repeating the girl's words. "Of course, if you wish you can do so; but what reason have you for wishing it so soon?"

"Oh! ma'am, if you please, it's because of the bedroom. I have never slept a wink since I have

been in the house. Mrs. Charlton says it is the room where the lady was found dead in her bed, murdered or something; and I am sure I heard the horrible noise last night—"

"That will do, Mary," her mistress replied. "If you wish to leave you can do so, but don't talk nonsense, or listen to it either!"

Mrs. Hazlewood was indolent in the extreme, and in very few cases would have taken the trouble to have even ascertained the cause why a servant chose to quit her service. She was too tired ever to engage one herself, and in the event of a change would merely write to her agent in town to supply her with another, not that she often troubled him, for the sole reason that so long as her house was cleaned, her dinner cooked, and her bells answered, she never troubled what occurred, provided she did not know it, and incurred no exertion thereby.

Horace had returned to The Della, and with Mr. Langford was amongst the first to call on the new comers.

Mrs. Hazlewood was delighted to become better acquainted with her landlord, whilst Gertrude was glad to see anyone, it did not much matter who, so that it was some one to change the monotony of life at Myrtle Villa.

She entered freely into conversation with Horace, discussing the merits and demerits of India, and expressing her disgust of our colder climes.

"Ah! you will like it better after awhile," he said, and gazing with admiration on the fair girl he thought his father had not overrated her charms.

"And so there is a story in connection with this house, Mr. Langford," she said, after they had been conversing some while. "I do wish you would tell it me, for if anything would reconcile me to it it would be to know it had been the scene of some romance in which love and jealousy got mixed up, with, may be, a duel or murder to complete the tragedy, not forgetting the ghost who stays to put things right by declaring it won't rest until the murderer has been discovered."

"I was not aware of any such story in connection with the Villa," Horace replied, as he looked round the room in search of something to change the topic of conversation; and finding it, as his eyes fell on the piano, he asked Gertrude if she sang.

"Well, yes," she replied, "but that is no answer to my curiosity respecting the story. Tell me that, and I will sing you a song. Is it a bargain?" she continued, playfully.

"Not if hearing the song depends on a story of which I am entirely ignorant!" said Horace, a shade of annoyance passing over his countenance. "But what has led you to suppose there is such a one?" he added.

"Our servants are leaving us one by one," said Gertrude, "until we shall soon have to do the work ourselves, or be dependent on the services of Mrs. Charlton."

Horace bit his lip, and an angry light came into his eyes as he answered,—

"Is it that woman who is doing all the mischief? Get rid of her, and you will hear no more of servants leaving or ghostly visits. Some years ago, I believe, an old lady was found dead in her bed one morning, in one of the rooms of this house. What a dreadful thing, wasn't it?" he said with ludicrous solemnity. "And now for the song."

"I am very disappointed," said Gertrude, as she languidly rose from the sofa. "I had made up my mind for something really exciting."

Horace turned over the leaves of the music, as her rich contralto voice resounded through the room. They were becoming very friendly, he thought.

Gertrude, too indolent to do anything but talk, could not be prevailed upon to sing more than the one song, according to the contract.

"But he is the nicest fellow I ever met," she thought; and long after he and his father had left she sang his praises into her mother's ears.

The cold autumn had ended with the November fogs, and Mrs. Hazlewood had agreed with her daughter to spend the winter in London.

They had made few acquaintances during their residence in Hertford, with the exception of Mr. Langford and Horace.

The latter had been almost a constant visitor at the Villa; it was so nice, he said, to know a girl who not only had a good voice, but knew how to use it, and who could sing a duet with a fellow without putting him out every other bar.

And Gertrude declared she would not go back to India now for anything. She had no idea how pleasant it was in England, where you did meet a fellow who could do something more than smoke, sleep, and drink, with a punkah going over his head all day.

Her native indolence seemed gradually to be leaving her, and she was always ready for a ride over the country, or a song with Horace for her companion.

The old gentleman was delighted to see how matters were progressing. He had become almost as fond of the Indian beauty as his son; he admired her petulance, he encouraged her in her waywardness, and he felt he could take her to his heart as a daughter whenever his son should give him the right to do so.

Gertrude had made the latter promise he would see them in London. And they had not been many days at the Langham before he was announced.

Mrs. Hazlewood's health was so impaired from long residence in a tropical climate that she was glad that Horace should accompany her daughter in her walks, or be her escort to the theatre.

Lady Orbury, a very old friend of Mrs. Hazlewood's, was the first to call on ascertaining she had arrived in London.

Her ladyship was a fat, portly dame, with two very ugly daughters, whom she had been vainly trying to dispose of in the matrimonial market for the last two or three seasons, but without avail; and she had made up her mind this time to spare no expense in endeavouring to carry out her scheme.

"My dear Augusta," she said as she sat in Mrs. Hazlewood's boudoir at the Langham, "I did not stand on ceremony by sending a formal invitation; but I do hope that you and dear Gertrude"—she inwardly hated Gertrude—"will come on the 18th. We are going to have a grand affair; military band, my dear. Dancing to commence at 10 P.M. And if you know any gentleman—we are rather short of gentlemen—by all means invite him to accompany you. My dear girls would not come up, as I know your health is so delicate, and girls are so noisy."

"It was very kind of you to be so very thoughtful," replied Mrs. Hazlewood; "but I am much better. However, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing your daughters on the 18th, when you have kindly invited Gertrude and myself; and as you have given us *carte blanche*, I will bring Mr. Langford, a most estimable young man, and a great friend of my daughter's."

Lady Orbury shrugged her fat shoulders. "A plain matter," she said, inwardly. "But never mind, he may be wealthy; and what a conquest," she thought, as she descended the stairs, after bidding Mrs. Hazlewood a most effusive adieu, "should my girls get him away from that pink-and-white beauty!"

And so on the 18th Mrs. Hazlewood and daughter, accompanied by Horace, ascended the steps in Eaton-square, where Lady Orbury resided.

The mansion was ablaze with light, a canopy was erected from the entrance to the street, the steps and pavement under which were covered with scarlet cloth. The ball-room, like the entrance hall, had statuary arranged each side, with tropical plants between; a lamp being held by each figure, covered with rose-coloured glass, threw a warm roseate hue over the spacious apartment; through this was an ante-room, which opened into a conservatory, lit up with the same warm light, whilst the scent of flowers throw a sweet perfume over all.

Dancing had commenced, the band playing "Dream Faces" as they entered. Gertrude, leaning on the arm of Horace, to whom she had promised the first dance, looking bewitchingly

lovely in a dress of pure white, ornamented with blue and silver.

"Who is that lovely girl?" asked the Hon. Mrs. Pigott of an old dowager with whom she was in conversation.

"She is Miss Hazlewood, an Indian heiress," was the reply; "and she certainly eclipses all the other beauties here this evening."

Lady Orbury was delighted with Horace, although all hopes as to the chances of her two plain girls against the beautiful Gertrude fell below zero as she compared notes between them and the latter.

"Miss Hazlewood," said Horace, as after the first dance he could get no opportunity of addressing her, "I am sure you must be tired. Come into the conservatory, it is cooler there."

Gertrude smiled, as lifting the little tablet at her side, and the band striking up another waltz,—

"You see," she said, "I am engaged to Captain D'Orsay for this, and for this, and for this!" she continued, pointing to the different claims.

Horace for the moment forgot himself—forgot everything but his annoyance and disappointment.

"Captain D'Orsay be hanged!" he said; then, suddenly seeing the look of astonishment on Gertrude's face, "A thousand pardons!" he added; "but I think it is hard to banish me like this."

"I shall be glad of a chat in the conservatory after this," she said, and playfully tapping him with her fan she arose as the Captain approached.

And Horace remained where he stood replying vaguely to Mrs. Hazlewood's remarks, and inwardly cursing Captain D'Orsay as he and Gertrude whirled past.

The dance over he reminded her of her promise.

"I am quite ready," she said, unlinking her arm from that of her late partner. "Now then, Mr. Langford, I hope it is nothing worse than a lecture on botany you are going to give me. You look so awfully grave," she added, as with a bow she left the Captain, "that I am afraid I have done something very wrong."

For a moment he would not answer, but leading her from the throng of dancers to the cool conservatory beyond, where there was no one sufficiently near to hear.

"Miss Hazlewood—Gertrude," he said, "how can you trifle with my feelings? You must know how I love you. My every action must prove to you the depth of a passion that, until this moment, I had not the courage to avow. Until we met I knew not what love meant. Tell me, darling, that you love me too!"

He paused, there was something which caused him to falter for a moment, but it was only a moment; the next, conscience, truth, were all thrown aside, and there, mid the scent of flowers which Gertrude loved so well, with nothing but the sound of falling water from a tiny fountain to drown the sound of man's perfidy, Gertrude became the affianced wife of Horace Langford.

An hour later Mrs. Hazlewood's carriage was announced, and as he pressed the arm which leaned upon his own in passing down the stairs, the notes of "Dream Faces" again fell on his ear.

CHAPTER III.

THE brightness of the December day had passed before Gertrude arose the morning after the ball; she had had little sleep, and that little was disturbed and restless. She dreamt that she and Horace were walking in the grounds of the Della, he breathing into her ears that love-story of the evening before; and she thought, as she turned her eyes to meet his, a woman, whose face she could not see, dragged him from her, and she tried to follow, but her feet would not move, and as she saw him going further and further she awoke with a scream.

On entering the sitting room she found Mr. Langford already there, and in deep conversation with her mother, from whose expression

of countenance Gertrude knew he had obtained her consent to their union.

"I am so glad to see you look so well this morning, my darling!" he said, as he rose to meet her. "I was afraid you would be very tired after last night's dissipation. And Mrs. Hazlewood," he said, turning to that lady, "may I tell her how happy you have made me." "I don't think there is much occasion for that Horace," she replied, "as those tell-tale blushes speak for themselves. Is it not so, Gerty?" she continued, as she drew her daughter to her side, and imprinted a fond kiss on those ruby lips.

"Mamma, dear, I am so glad you are pleased," she replied. "And I am sure we shall be very happy—which, if Horace lets me have all my own way, there is no doubt of," she added, mischievously. "And now, Mr. Langford, to begin. After lunch—which I hope mamma will order without delay—I want you to escort me up Regent-street, to see the shops dressed for Christmas."

"That I will with pleasure," replied Horace, as a servant, in answer to Mrs. Hazlewood's summons, entered, and lunch was soon prepared.

"It was a very jolly ball, was it not?" said Gertrude, as she toyed with the wing of a chicken. "I don't think I ever enjoyed myself so much in all my life—and Captain D'Orsay was a delightful partner!—I never danced with anyone who could waltz so well!"

"Captain D'Orsay be—" began Horace, in a tone of annoyance, but stopped himself as Gertrude, putting her hand over his mouth, said, laughing,—

"Now, no naughty words! But you must admit he is incomparable in a round dance!"

"I admit nothing. What can I know about D'Orsay's dancing?" said Horace. "But if you are satisfied, that is sufficient."

Lunch over, Mrs. Hazlewood looked at the clock on the chimney-piece, compared it with her watch; and then, as if comparing both with the aspect of the dreary outdoor view, proposed that, if the young people were going for a walk, it would be better to do so before the fog came on. So, after having laid out the programme for the afternoon and evening's amusement, Gertrude hastened to her room to put on her walking attire.

Town was full. Children, home for the holidays, were with their parents busy in making purchases for Christmas; each little one with its bright face looking forward with delight to the morning when Santa Claus would fill the little stocking hung up as a receptacle for the good saint's gifts.

Gertrude was naturally attracted to those shops where millinery and ball-dresses, finery and jewellery most abounded, and was about to enter one to make a purchase of a bracelet as a voice she had heard before attracted her attention.

It was Captain D'Orsay, who was in the act of making a bargain for one or two little Maltese puppies that a man on the curb was offering for sale.

"No, sir! couldn't take less; honestly worth five pounds, if they are a fardin'," the man was saying. "None of yer rats sewed up in dog skins 'ere, yer honor; the real thing—genuine," and he held up one of the little mites by its bit of a tail, to which the puppy did not seem to have the least objection, as extended thus it wriggled about without a murmur, apparently greatly to the satisfaction of the vendor.

"There is Captain D'Orsay," said Gertrude to Horace, who was intently studying the ornament about to be purchased; but as the captain heard his name mentioned he turned, and, raising his hat, expressed his delight at meeting Miss Hazlewood.

The dog fancier, not to be done out of his sale, stood watching them, as a cat might a mouse, apparently unaware of their movements, until a step in the wrong direction, he thought it time to make them aware he was still open to an offer.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," he said, touching

D'Orsay on the shoulder, "ere you shall 'ave 'im for three pounds, and drop the shillins."

Horace, who had previously had his back to the man, now turned, and an angry flush came over his face as he saw before him Joe Binks.

The latter could not suppress a start, but quickly recovering himself, before waiting for the other's answer, he held out the companion pup to Horace.

"You buy a little dawg, sir?" he asked. "Take the two, gentlemen, and I'll make 'em five pounds!"

"Oh! I had almost forgotten," said D'Orsay, as he took the puppy. "What do you think of him, Miss Hazlewood?"

"I think them little beauties!" she replied. "But it is very cruel to keep them out here in the cold. See how they are shivering."

The Captain decided on purchasing one, for which he was to pay three pounds when delivered at his chambers; the other Joe again offered to Horace, with a significant look, as he asked to what address he should take it.

"I don't want it," Horace said, angrily. "Can't you take no for an answer?"

The dangerous light which came into the other's eyes caused him to falter in his decision, and inquiring of Gertrude if she really admired the puppy, and her answering in the affirmative, he agreed to purchase it.

"Ah! I thought you'd buy him, sir," said Joe, as he asked if he should carry it home for the lady.

"Oh, no," said Gertrude, "keep it here for a few minutes, and I will come back for it," and after bidding Captain D'Orsay good-bye, she entered the shop to complete the purchase of the bracelet.

Horace stayed where she had left him, under pretence of guarding the dog, but really to speak to Joe, or rather hear what the latter had to say to him.

"Well, Mr. 'Orace," said that gentleman, "what's the game now? You tell me to keep away six months, and you see I'm a doin' it. The 'ouse yonder," and he gave his head a jerk to the right, "is shut up, yer know."

"Shut up!" exclaimed Horace; "do you mean to tell me they are gone?"

Yes, been gone six weeks, no one knows where. 'Ow long 'ave you been in town, that you didn't know it?"

A tumult of feeling ran through the other's mind, and, try as he could, he could not hide from the man before him what was passing within him; but governing himself, he was about to interrogate him further, when Gertrude came from the shop, having completed her purchase.

"You 'ad better let me carry the dawg, miss. I'll foller ye now, sir," he said, as Gertrude was anxious for the possession of her new pet at once.

They arrived at the Circus, when she suddenly remembered she had to call at the Soho Bazaar, respecting the engagement of a new maid, so asked Horace if he would mind going with the man to the Langham, where he was to leave the dog in charge of her mother, and return to the bazaar, where she would await him.

Being agreeable to this arrangement, a hansom was hailed, into which she jumped, and Horace proceeded with his companion.

For some moments not a word passed between them; Horace in deep thought seemed almost oblivious of the other's presence, until an "ahem" from Joe made him aware of the fact.

"Why! Mr. 'Orace," said that individual at last, "I should a thought you 'ad been glad; as from what I sees, a hobstacle is not what you requires. I tells yer the 'ouse is to let; and although I 'ave made hevery inquiry, no one knows han'thing."

He had crept up to his side, and as Horace took the dog from his arms, "Joe," he said, "you must go to Hertford to-morrow early, and make inquiries in the neighbourhood; call on me in Norfolk Street this evening at eight o'clock, and I will furnish you with funds, and give you further instructions," and writing his address on his card, he gave it into the man's hand.

Joe took the card, and placing it in his waist-

coat pocket, stroked his ugly chin and rubbed his dirty hands as though perfectly satisfied with his afternoon's work.

"You are in luck, my boy," he said, congratulating himself on his good fortune. "Ah! Mr. 'Orace, I knows yer little game; but you'll never know mine, unless he splits, which he ain't likely to do. Ere, my little chap," he continued, addressing the other puppy, "I'll take yer to the Captain's, and then to business, not that's no mortal use whatsoever a' goin' to Hertford. I knows 'er sperrit. She'd starve afore she'd 'unt him hup like that," and thus soliloquizing, Joe was about to cross the road, when a "bus" drew up just in his path.

"Now then, miss!" shouts the conductor, "where do you want to go to?" as a girl approached the vehicle. "Old Kent Road!" he continued, in answer to her inquiry. "Right you are, jump in."

It was a fair, childish face, and the violet eyes raised to the man's face, as she spoke, were eyes not easily to be forgotten by those who had seen them once.

One glimpse satisfied Joe Binks, and on a sudden changed his plans, for as the door closed on the girl he jumped on the roof of the 'bus.

They stopped at the Elephant and Castle, when the former got out and proceeded in the direction of the Old Kent Road, followed by Joe, who had got down from the 'bus at the same time.

The evening was very foggy, and the latter hastened his pace, so as at last to be side-by-side with the girl; and holding out the puppy he had sold to Captain D'Orsay, he again offered him for sale.

She gave a start as he addressed her; the voice seemed familiar, although in the semi-darkness the man's features were scarcely discernible.

"No," she replied, "I have no money," and, quickening her pace, hurried on.

Joe watched her receding figure, and, being quite satisfied as to her identity, returned to keep his appointment at Norfolk Street, after having left the little Maltese with his new master.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" was his inward ejaculation, "if it ain't a curious coincidence," and thus ruminating he ascended the stairs of his own residence in Short's-garden's, Drury-lane, before he went on to Horace.

Drawing the only chair, or rather part of a chair, the room contained, to the table, he began to write, and after tearing up several first endeavours at last succeeded in compiling a letter, which he assured himself would do, and addressing it in a bold hand to Ralph Barton, Esq., he descended the rickety stairs with the note in his hands, and emerged into the street.

Horace was awaiting him at the hotel where he was staying.

"Are you prepared to start at once?" he said, as he studied a time-table he had in his hand. "If she gets hold of the old man my game is up. He swore the last time that he would pay my debts no more, but if I can only manage to keep matters quiet for a few weeks all will be right."

"She be in Lunnnon, Mr. 'Orace," said Joe. "I seed her this very night!" and then he related his adventure of the evening.

"And she did not know you!" asked Horace.

"Not likely," replied Joe. "I takes care to keep in the dark, an' the night is so foggy that 'twould puzzle my mother to know me outside."

Horace remained deep in thought for a few moments, his head resting on his hand, apparently forgetful of the man's presence; but, as the sudden recollection came across him, he rose from his seat, as though a new resolution had formed itself in his mind.

"Joe," he said, impatiently, "I am a scoundrel. I am sick of the whole business, and have half a mind to forfeit all, everything, and make a clean breast of it to my father. This skeleton always at my elbow will drive me mad."

Joe's eyes and mouth opened simultaneously in sheer astonishment, and he gazed at Horace as if he thought he must have lost his reason already.

"You—lose—all—and be——"

"Hush!" said Horace, as Joe jerked out the words.

They had had the desired effect. His master was himself again. He listened to all he had to say, as with his hands behind him he impatiently kicked with the toe of his patent-leather boot a tuft of the Turkey rug on which he stood.

"Here you are," he said, as the man finished, and taking five sovereigns from his pocket placed them in Joe's hands. "Three for the dog," he continued, "two for your journey. Keep an eye on the Old Kent-road, and give me an address where to find you."

"There's my card, Mr. 'Orace," said the man, as he handed him a piece of paper torn from the edge of a newspaper, on which, after sundry visits to his mouth, he had at last induced a stumpy lead pencil, from the moisture there obtained, to write Mr. Joseph Binks, 10, Short's-gardens, Drury-lane. "That'll find me, and when you wants me, Mr. 'Orace, I'm at your service."

And Horace was left alone, as with bowed head he sat thinking of the events of the last few months, and then of others of a former date, the remembrance of which would cling to him till death.

For a moment his better angel seemed about to prevail; but a few hours later, in the society of Gertrude Hazlewood, his good resolutions were cast to the winds, and he was ready to put aside every obstacle which should present itself to their union.

CHAPTER IV.

"On I madame, it is lovely!" and Josephine, Gertrude's new maid, took from a box, which had been sent from Howell and James, a ball-dress, in which her mistress was to appear that evening.

It was pale amethyst straw-berried, of a thin silky texture, with tiny spots of gold, over a satin petticoat of a deeper shade, trimmed with moss roses and little-gold ornaments.

Gertrude sat before the glass, scarcely turning as her maid spoke. Her luxuriant hair hung loose over her shoulders, and she was clasping and unclasping a gold bracelet set with diamonds and pearls, with which Horace had presented her the last evening.

"Yes, that will do," she said, pettishly, as Josephine still extolled the merits of the new dress; "but come here, Josephine, and brush my hair. My head aches, and I think it will do me good."

"Certainly, mademoiselle," replied Josephine, as, laying down the dress, she approached where Gertrude was sitting.

"You are very pretty," said the latter, as she sat looking at the girl's face reflected in the glass, whilst she passed and repassed the brush over the silken tresses, "I wonder you are not married."

The brush fell from the maid's hand, and as she stooped to pick it up Gertrude could not see the crimson colour which had mounted to her forehead.

"I shall never marry, mademoiselle," she replied.

"Never marry! Josephine," exclaimed Gertrude, "why you are only twenty-three. And surely you don't want to be an old maid!"

"I think old maids are very happy," replied the girl; "but it is nearly four o'clock; would not mademoiselle like some tea? There is nothing that is so good for a headache."

"Yes, presently," said Gertrude, "but I do believe, Josephine, you have a love story. I wish you would tell me all about it."

"Yes, Miss Gertrude, you think so. I have no time to think of love, I assure you," she replied, evasively. "I was left an orphan when I was eighteen, and have seen too much trouble to think of love."

"Well," said Gertrude, haughtily, "I have no wish to dive into your private affairs. I will have my tea now."

Josephine left the room, and when she

returned with the little tea-tray Gertrude could see that she had been crying.

"You can go to your room," she said. "And tell mamma I should like to see her here."

"What do you think of Josephine?" said Gertrude, as she and her mother sat over their afternoon tea.

"I think her a very nice girl, my dear," returned her mother; "she is very clever at her needle, and so quiet and reserved in her manners, it is quite a treat to have such a young person about you; and I think you cannot do better than retain her after your marriage. She can speak French, for I heard her talking with Henri, one of the hotel servants, and you will find her very useful when travelling."

"Yes, I shall keep her, that is, if she will stop," was Gertrude's reply; "but there is something strange about her I cannot understand. However, mother mine, I suppose everyone has a secret; and apart from Josephine and her, what do you think of the dress?"

Mrs. Hazlewood languidly turned to where the new costume for that evening's ball lay on the sofa.

"It is splendid," she said, "and I am sure it will become you, darling!"

"I hope Captain D'Orsay will be there," said the beauty, as she rearranged a rosebud on the skirt she was to wear. "I like him better than any one I have met in London."

Her mother turned.

"I don't think Horace would like to hear you say so," she said.

"Oh! mamma dear," said the girl, "Horace has no need to fear. I could not marry a poor man if I loved him ever so much; and you know D'Orsay is as poor as a church mouse. It's a great pity," she continued, with a sigh, "as, in every other respect, he is the very beau-ideal of what a man should be. His regiment, it appears, was quartered at Madras when we were there; and he knew papa quite well, he says."

"It must have been some years ago, but I think I remember the house," was her mother's reply; "but had you not better ring for Josephine, or you will not be dressed for dinner?"

"What time have you ordered the carriage for this evening?" Gertrude inquired of her mother, as she placed her hand on the bell.

"Ten o'clock," was the reply.

In answer to her summons Josephine entered; all traces of her emotion had passed, as she asked her mistress what dress she intended to wear for dinner; and the latter having told her which, she soon busied herself in arranging the soft lace which fell from the semi-long sleeves.

Mrs. Hazlewood still sat before the fire. It was a cold, cheerless day, and as she watched the maid, as she afterwards commenced to dress her mistress's hair, she thought what a sweet face she had; but a shade of sorrow seemed to hang over her countenance, unusual in one so young.

"Have you ever been abroad, Josephine?" she asked.

"I was born in Alsace, madam," she replied; "but on the death of my father, who was English, my mother came to England, and I have never left it since. I was fourteen then."

"And what made your mother leave France?" Mrs. Hazlewood asked.

"She was obliged to do so, as only on those conditions did she receive any help from my father's relatives; and we had very little money, madam," she replied.

"How would you like to travel, Josephine?" asked Gertrude.

"To travel? Once more to see *ma belle France*. Oh, mademoiselle, I shall indeed be happy!" and clasping the brush she was using between her hands she raised her beautiful violet eyes to the ceiling as her face became radiant with expectant hope.

"Well," said Mrs. Hazlewood, "Gertrude's marriage is fixed for the first of February, after which she will go to Paris to spend her honeymoon, and of course, if you have no wish to leave her service, you will accompany her, and then she will return to 'The Dells.'"

The girl's face became livid, as turning to where Mrs. Hazlewood was sitting,—

"Did madam say 'The Dells'?" she asked.

"Yes, Josephine. But what is the matter?" she said. "You are as white as a sheet."

"Oh, nothing, madam!" said the girl, as she pressed her hand on her heart. "A sudden pain. It takes me sometimes when I do not know. Excuse me, mademoiselle. I hope you like your hair," and handing her mistress her ivory hand-glass she hastened to adjust her dress.

The ball at which Gertrude was to be present that evening was not on the extensive scale on which Lady Orbury's had been carried out; it was, more properly speaking, a carpet dance.

The Hon. Mrs. Pigott was the hostess—a fat old lady, whose greatest pleasure consisted in seeing young people enjoy themselves, and although, not being rich, she could not afford to entertain but few friends, those few were always select.

She was by marriage an aunt of Captain D'Orsay, and at his suggestion an invitation was sent to the Hazlewoods and Horace, whom he decreed to his amiable kinswoman as a jolly set.

The Hazlewoods had already arrived, and Gertrude was *vis-à-vis* with D'Orsay in a set of quadrilles as Horace entered. He wended his way to Mrs. Pigott, who was delighted to see him.

"I am afraid some one will run off with our new beauty this season," she was saying to an old lady sitting near her. "What do you think, Mr. Langford? Lord Ransdale is raving about her, and his sister tells me writes verses by the yard in praise of her charms. They are all mad to be introduced, and D'Orsay is as jealous as—"

To what D'Orsay's jealousy was to be likened Mrs. Pigott had not time to say, as some fresh arrival occupied that lady's attention; and the dance being finished, Miss Hazlewood was led by her late partner to where her mother was sitting.

Horace was not long in approaching where they were, and after hoping Mrs. Hazlewood was quite well, he invited Gertrude to walk round the rooms.

The buzz of conversation was general, flirting and scandal proceeding at its usual pace, and the pianist was arranging his music for the next dance—a waltz (for which Gertrude had engaged herself previous to Horace's arrival), as they wandered around the different rooms, all of which had been furnished by Mrs. Pigott with different amusements, so as to suit the taste of all her guests.

They now entered one in which were several tables covered with green baize, round which elderly ladies and gentlemen were seated, denoting the elements of gambling; and Gertrude, with Horace, paused by one where four ladies were alone, three of whom were young girls, whilst the fourth, dressed in half gipsy costume, was a handsome matron.

She was laying out the cards in a mysterious circle, but stopped as they approached, and addressing one of the girls,—

"Shall I go on, Miss Floyd?" she asked, looking at Horace and his companion, doubtful that the young lady in question would consent.

"May I ask you what you are doing?" said Gertrude, as she answered in the affirmative, and the elder lady continued as she passed her white hand over the different cards,—

"There will be a great change and a disappointment, but the pill will be a golden one," she said, as she denoted the diamonds which lay around the cards; a club, which stood for the girl herself, who was a brunette.

"I am having my fortune told," said Miss Floyd.

And while hearts, spades, &c., were read, and their prognostications firmly believed, one of the other girls whispered to Gertrude,—

"Do let her cut the cards for you, she is wonderful. Mrs. Pigott always engages her whenever she gives a soirée."

"I will when she has finished yours," said Gertrude, smiling; "but come, Horace, they have begun waltzing again," and linking her arm in

his they soon entered the ball-room, where her partner was waiting her.

The next the Captain solicited the favour, but pleading fatigue, Gertrude begged to be excused; and telling her mother where she would be found she returned to the precursor of destiny.

The girls had left to join the dancers, and the sylbil was alone as Gertrude approached the table.

"You have returned, then, and alone! I am so glad," she said, "it is so much better to read the cards when you can, without reserve, tell what you see."

"Well, I hope it will be nothing very dreadful," laughed Gertrude, as, removing her gloves, she commenced shuffling and cutting them according to the other's directions.

"We will take the queen of diamonds for you," said the woman, as she commenced laying the cards singly as she had done with the others. "You are to be married shortly," she continued; "money everywhere, your future husband is young, handsome, and wealthy, but—" and she paused.

"But what?" asked Gertrude.

She seemed not to heed the question, as, the cards now all laid out, she passed her hand over each.

"There is treachery, deceit. I cannot tell your fortune, young lady," she said, and she began to sweep the cards from the table.

"Oh I don't do that," cried Gertrude. "I do not mind. Do tell me what you see."

"I may be wrong," she said, "but if you will look here, this is the house," and she took up the ace of hearts; "and in it is a fair woman; she crosses your path; I will tell no more," and putting the cards together, she again shuffled them for the next who wished to peep into futurity.

"You here, Miss Hazlewood!" said Captain D'Orsay. "I have been looking for you everywhere," and he approached the table where Gertrude stood, an almost frightened look on her countenance.

"Do come and have your fortune told, Captain D'Orsay. Mine is something so dreadful that I cannot prevail on her to tell me anything," said Gertrude, with a forced laugh.

"You must remember, Miss Hazlewood, I have not had one dance this evening, and having my future foretold will scarcely compensate for that."

"Will the gentleman have a wish?" asked the fortune-teller. "Cut twice, and I will tell you not only what it is, but whether you will have it."

D'Orsay cut as directed, when the former placed the packs one on the other, and commenced scanning them through, counting as she proceeded.

"They say apples that have felt the winter's snow are the sweetest; you will have your wish. Would you have me tell you more?"

"Oh! no thank you," returned the Captain. "I am no propounder of riddles, nor believer in your art."

The lady shrugged her shoulders, placed the cards on the table, and merely said,—

"As you will."

"Would you like to know my wish, Miss Hazlewood?" he said, as he led her from the room.

"Above all things," replied Gertrude, "for, being a woman, as a matter of course, I am inquisitive."

"Come here, then," was the reply, "and I will tell you."

And leading her away from the rest to where flowers alone were witnesses of the scene, a tale of love was again poured into the beauty's ear.

"Captain D'Orsay," she said, "spare me. It cannot be."

Till then Gertrude did not know how much she loved the man before her; the trammels of her engagement seemed unbearable, and in that moment, passion, wealth, all but her love was forgotten, and she almost hated Horace, to whom she had pledged her troth.

She leant against a pedestal, not daring to trust herself to look at D'Orsay.

"Gertrude, my darling! give me one word,

Tell me at least that I may hope, or has another won the prize for which I would have given my life!"

Forgetful of all, she turned, and with the impetuosity of her nature, she avowed her passion. She told him of her engagement to another—an engagement which neither her sense of honour nor her pride would allow her to break.

"No, D'Orsay!" she said, "we must never meet again but as strangers. But in the future, darling, think of me kindly, and don't despise me for the confession I have made. You will meet another woman more worthy of your love, and the remembrance of this moment with its weakness will be but a thing of the past."

He was about to respond, when a movement of the curtain closing the conservatory from the adjoining room caused the words to die on his lips, and Horace stood before them.

"Allow me," he said, as approaching Gertrude he offered her his arm, "they are going to supper."

His manner was cold and restrained, and a shade of annoyance was spread over his features as he led her from the room, leaving D'Orsay alone and unnoticed.

CHAPTER V.

JOSEPHINE was awaiting her mistress's return. She was very tired, and had once or twice fallen asleep in the chair before the fire, when the sound of her own voice in her dream awoke her to a sense of her position.

The little timepieces had just struck the hour. It was three o'clock when the outer bell announced their arrival, and hastily arranging the table for the coffee she had prepared she listened for the ascending footsteps.

She was struck by the pale, wan look on the beautiful face of the girl, as she, with her mother, at last entered the room.

"Mademoiselle is much fatigued," she said, as she hastened to remove her cloak, and push the chair near the fire for her reception, with another one for Mrs. Hazlewood; "shall I pour out the coffee?"

"Yes, Josephine, and then loosen my hair," was the reply; "when you can go to bed."

And very wearied and worn Gertrude felt scarcely enabled to restrain the tears which would rise to her eyes as her mother talked over the events of the evening.

"Don't talk any more, mamma," she at last said; "I do not seem as if I can listen. I do not feel well," and she leant back in the chair, as though thoroughly exhausted.

"Well, darling, I will not. Josephine, assist your mistress to undress;" and as the maid was about to leave the room, she returned at Mrs. Hazlewood's command; that lady, after bidding her daughter good-night, retiring to her own room.

As the door closed behind her Gertrude could no longer control her grief; she burst into tears, but Josephine's presence seemed to recall her to herself, as her pride came to her rescue.

"What can I do, mademoiselle?" she asked.

"I am so sorry to see you so unhappy."

"I am not unhappy, Josephine," she replied; "what should make you think so? I am wearied, only wearied," and bidding her leave her for the night the girl left the room.

"Wearied, only wearied," she said to herself, as she entered her own chamber; "and mademoiselle is going to be married. And did I dream or was it true that madame said she would reside at the 'Dells'! The Dells," she repeated; "it cannot be there. Oh! Heaven, it cannot be there!"

She looked at herself in the glass, before which she now stood. "Am I pretty?" she asked herself; "he once said I was, and he was false. But oh! if she would but go to Alsace. If I could once again behold my own blue hills I think I could forget; at least, I could die happy there."

But even at the thought she shuddered. Death, when health, youth, and beauty were all hers! No, she was too young to die; others had out-

lived greater sorrows than hers, why should not she!

So Christmas came and went, and the date fixed for Gertrude's wedding was close at hand.

Since that night at Mrs. Pigott's she had but once seen D'Orsay, and then the events of that evening were alluded to by neither.

She had schooled her mind to forget that scene, and, if possible, him; whilst, although more reserved and subdued, she endeavoured to appreciate the attentions bestowed on her by Horace.

Mrs. Hazlewood was fully occupied in making arrangements for the approaching marriage, which, at the suggestion of Lady Orbury, was to take place from her house, whose guests Gertrude and her mother now were.

Josephine, as a matter of course, accompanied the ladies. She had grown almost cheerful in her situation; the sadness seemed to have left her features, and she was in raptures at the thoughts of travelling on the Continent.

Costumiers and modistes were in full request, until Gertrude, wearied at their continual demand on her time, at last left it all to be arranged by her mother, who, with her innate indolence, left it in turn to the control and approval of Josephine and themselves.

It was now but eight days previous to the ceremony. Mr. Langford, senior, had arrived from Hertford.

Miss Floyd and the two Misses Orbury were to act as bridesmaids.

Josephine had never heard the name of the gentleman to whom her young mistress was to be married. Since the time when she refused to relate her history the former had been most reticent on enlightening her in the least with respect to her own affairs; and from the fact of her never mixing with other servants she was in total ignorance.

She was now busily engaged packing and labelling the travelling trunks, whilst Gertrude extended on a sofa, drawn up to the fire, was supposed to be reading; but the book laid on her lap, open at the same place, till at last, throwing it on one side, she turned to where Josephine was still occupied.

Her eyes became riveted on a small photograph case, which, as Josephine took her handkerchief from her pocket, had fallen to the ground; it had become unfatened, and, unconscious of its loss, the girl continued her occupation.

"Give that to me," said Gertrude, in an imperious tone.

"What, mademoiselle?" asked Josephine, startled at the severity of her mistress's tone.

"That photograph you have dropped on the floor," was the reply.

Josephine seized the case, the loss of which she only that moment discovered, and rising as the colour mounted to the roots of her hair,—

"Excuse me, mademoiselle must excuse me," she said. "I cannot."

"You cannot!" exclaimed the beauty, whose colour was now equal to her own. "I insist!"

"Oh! mademoiselle," pleaded the girl, "please do not ask me; it is all I have left," and she burst into tears, as she placed it in her bosom.

"But I do ask," replied the other. "I command!"

For a moment Josephine hesitated. Should she obey! and if she did, it could do no harm; it was but a likeness, which to others meant nothing; it was only to her connected with reminiscences wrought with happiness and pain.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "here it is," and she handed the case to her mistress.

Gertrude took it from the girl's hand, and as she looked on the picture within she stood as one dazed before Josephine, who, as she wondered at her manner, almost regretted she had conceded to her wish.

"And so this is it," she said, at last; "and where did you get it from?"

"He gave it me," she replied, innocently. "Oh, do not look like that at me; I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it, mademoiselle, indeed I can't!" and she burst into tears.

"You cannot bear it!" said the other, slowly, repeating her words. "You vile creature! leave my presence this instant, and tell Mrs. Hazlewood I wish to see her immediately."

"But, mademoiselle, do hear me," said the girl. "I am not the vile creature you denounce me; pity me, but do not look at me like that."

"I tell you to go," said her mistress. "I require no explanation; and take this with you," and she flung the case at Josephine's feet, who picked it up, and replaced it in her bosom, when she hastened to inform Mrs. Hazlewood of her young lady's wish.

On entering the room that lady was surprised to find Gertrude in a paroxysm of grief, as with her head buried in the cushions she was sobbing like a child.

"My dear girl, what is the matter?" she asked.

"Oh! mamma, mamma," cried the beauty, as she raised her head at her mother's approach, "I shall never marry Horace Langford;" and then she related what had occurred within the last few moments; how she had discovered his portrait in the possession of her maid, and the latter's confession that he had given it to her.

"Gertrude, my dear child, do not give way like this, there must surely be some mistake," said Mrs. Hazlewood. "Why, Mr. Langford has never even seen your maid since she has been in your service. I will write to him at once to come here and explain her strange conduct if he can."

Lady Orbury was astonished when her friend told her what had happened, as the latter had prevailed on her daughter to dry her tears, and descend to the drawing-room, where her ladyship was; and it was agreed between them to send a letter to Horace without delay, whilst Josephine was weeping her eyes out over the portrait which had been the innocent cause of all.

Horace had given to his moustache the last twirl, and was in the act of going out, as Lady Orbury's little page knocked at the door, and delivered a letter into his own hands.

"Wait for an answer, please sir," said the boy, remaining on the mat.

"All right," Horace replied, as he proceeded to his room to read.

"Miss Hazlewood would be glad to see Mr. Langford at Eaton-square as soon as possible."

"Miss Hazlewood! Mr. Langford!" said Horace, as he read the letter with a puzzled expression of countenance. "I wonder what it is now!" and hastily writing, "Mr. Langford's compliments to Miss Hazlewood, and he will be at Eaton-square immediately," he gave it to the boy.

The missive had scarcely been placed in Gertrude's hands before Horace himself was announced; and as he entered the drawing-room, where Lady Orbury and her guests were seated, he was scarcely prepared for the reception which awaited him, a stiff, formal bow being the only recognition of his presence made by the proud beauty, as she stood by the window, apparently gazing on the snowy scene without.

Mrs. Hazlewood was the first to speak.

"Mr. Langford," she said, "my daughter sent for you at my suggestion to explain a very unpleasant matter which she has discovered this morning," and then she proceeded to tell him of his portrait falling from Josephine's pocket.

"It is an unaccountable to me as yourselves," he replied; "I cannot account for it; and does your daughter suspect me of intrigue with her maid, Mrs. Hazlewood! It is surely impossible. Till this day I never heard her name, and I am sure I never saw her. Miss Hazlewood, Gertrude," he said, appealing to the girl, whose eyes were still riveted on the snowy square, "for Heaven's sake, you do not think this of me!"

She turned as he addressed her, and he could not avoid noticing the scorn with which she replied,—

"Your own conscience can reply to you better than I can, Mr. Langford."

"Then, by Heaven, it tells me I am innocent,"

he said; "bring me face to face with this Josephine, with whom my name is mixed up, and she shall confess before all that she does not know me."

"I quite agree with Mr. Langford," said Lady Orbury; "if the girl says he gave her his likeness let her do so before his face," and she rang the bell.

"Tell Miss Hazlewood's maid we require her presence here," she said to the servant who entered. Several minutes elapsed, and no Josephine appeared. Lady Orbury was impatient; it was unusual with her servants to be so dilatory, and after the lapse of another five minutes she rang again.

It was answered by the same man.

"If you please, my lady," he said, "Miss Hazlewood's maid is gone, and this was left in her room." And he handed a silver salver to her ladyship, on which was a tiny note, and then retired.

"It is addressed to you, Gertrude," said the latter, "you had better read it."

Gertrude tore open the note; it was in Josephine's neat handwriting:—

"Mademoiselle," it ran, "forgive me for leaving you without a word, but I could not live to be looked on as the vile creature you believe me. I have been very happy whilst with you, but must now seek another home. Do not think unkindly of me. I am indeed innocent.—Your unhappy "JOSEPHINE."

Gertrude read it to the end, blotted as it was with the tears of the writer, and then she passed it to Horace.

He kept his eyes riveted on the paper, until the flush which had overspread his features when he first took it had subsided, and then, giving it to Mrs. Hazlewood,—

"It is beyond my comprehension," he said; "surely, Mrs. Hazlewood, you do not think I have anything to do with it!" And encouraged by the expression on her mother's face he approached where Gertrude still stood.

For a moment or two he was silent, looking as she did on the scene without; then, lowly uttering her name, he awaited the result, and as she raised her head their eyes met.

"Do you believe me?" he said.

He had taken her hand, which now she allowed to lay unresistingly in his.

"Horace," she said, "I know not what to believe. Swear to me, did you ever know anyone of the name of Josephine?"

"Never," he replied. "I swear it."

"Then I must believe you," was the reply.

It was not love which made Gertrude so easily forgive him. She was still sure he had deceived her, but how she could not understand. Perhaps she thought he had known this girl in the past, before she had seen him; and whilst he forgot she still remembered, and loved on. Was there not many such a case in the circle in which she moved, and yet those men married, and to the world, and even in their homes made good husbands. She knew she was not blameless. Could Horace have witnessed that scene in the conservatory, what would have been his feelings? But Josephine was gone; poor Josephine, with her sorrow, had fled; and why should she become the topic of conversation in the fashionable world, to which her marriage had been announced? No; she would rather be deceived by the man who was to make her his wife—the man who could add wealth to her wealth; and as they passed their lives together, riches and splendour would enable each to forget the canker which was gnawing at their hearts. And so Horace was forgiven, another maid engaged, and the preparations for the marriage duly completed.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER delivering her mistress's message to Mrs. Hazlewood, Josephine repaired to her own room, and collecting such things as belonged to her, she wrote the letter to Gertrude, and left the house.

All had come upon her so suddenly that she did not stay to consider where she was going. She only knew she was flying from the misery she must have experienced had she remained beneath the same roof with him and her. Yes, how fully now she understood why her lady was going to reside at the "Dells;" but how was it she had not discovered it before! It seemed so strange, and she had grown to be quite happy and contented in her new vocation.

"Where to, miss?" asked the cabman.

The man's question recalled her to herself. "Ah! where to!" she thought, but anxious to avoid the man's scrutiny, she quickly told him to drive to the nearest station.

Leaving her trunk in the cloak room, almost dazed with the excitement under which she was labouring, she went to inquire for apartments.

The hour was late, and she felt faint and hysterical. All seemed to eye her with suspicion. Those where she thought to be successful did not take in ladies; and where they would she felt afraid to enter, until, although the distance was great, she decided to go to the old lodgings she had before entering Miss Hazlewood's service.

An omnibus was just starting from Charing Cross, and hailing it she was about to cross, when her foot slipped on the kerb, and she fell. The conductor hastened to her assistance, but she was unable to move, and having to go with his bus he left her to the care of those who had begun to assemble round her.

"Poor thing! she has fainted!" said a woman. "Go to the shop there and fetch some water. And quite a lady, too!" she remarked to her neighbour.

A policeman now approached, and ascertaining the cause of the crowd, made the people stand back to let the air on her face.

"She's a comin' to!" said the first woman, as Josephine slowly opened her eyes as she felt the water on her face. "Poor dear! are you much hurt?" she asked.

"I think I have sprained my ankle," she replied, and in her attempt to rise she fell back again in a dead faint.

"Get a cab, policeman," said the woman, "and take her to the hospital; she can't stand."

A tall, military man now pushed his way through the crowd. He was a gentleman, and was allowed to pass.

"What is it, policeman?" he asked.

"A young woman in a faint, sir. She fell, and I think she's sprained her ankle."

"Get her to the hospital as soon as you can; she may have broken her leg," and he stooped to look at the white face of the unconscious girl.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible?" and taking a card from his pocket he told the constable to let her be taken to that address.

He was an old man, and the bystanders concluded he was her father, as having seen her lifted into the vehicle he hastened forward.

He took a hansom so as to be in advance of the other cab, and give his housekeeper directions to have everything prepared, at the same time sending a page-boy for a doctor.

The patient soon arrived, and was tenderly conveyed to the room got ready for her. The violet eyes were still closed, and she lay as one dead when the doctor arrived.

There was, however, no further injury than a slight sprain, which was not sufficient to account for the condition in which she was, he said, which he attributed to some great mental strain which this sudden accident had brought to a climax.

The remedies applied had in a short time a beneficial effect, and before the household retired for the night Josephine had sufficiently recovered to inquire where she was.

"In the house of a friend, my child," replied the housekeeper. "Don't you remember falling in the street, when you sprained your ankle? He found you in a dead faint, and had you removed here."

"How good! how kind!" exclaimed the

girl. "But what is his name! how came he to be so good to me!"

"It is Mr. Barton; and leastways he seems to know you," the woman said.

She started up in the bed.

"Mr. Barton, did you say!"

"Yes; but what's the matter! you mustn't excite yourself like that! There, there, keep quiet," she continued, as Josephine again fell back on the pillow.

"I have heard the name," she murmured; "but he is dead!" She did not speak to the woman; it was in a low tone to herself, little of which the other could catch.

In the morning the doctor called. The ankle, he said, would be well in a day or two; but she must be kept quiet, or he feared the excitability of her brain would end in fever.

The next day Mr. Barton seemed so anxious to see her that at last he gained the former's permission to do so, as she appeared so much better.

The housekeeper was to prepare the way by asking her if she would like to see the gentleman who had been so kind to her.

"Oh, so much," she replied, and having promised not to excite herself, Mr. Barton was told he could see her.

Her beautiful eyes unclosed as the door gently turned on its hinges, and as he advanced she covered her face with her hands.

"I dare not look—I dare not look," she cried. "They told me you were dead. Why did you not leave me to die as I did you!"

"Hush!" he answered, as he gently removed her hands from her face, and seated himself by her bedside. "Look at me, dearest. I never blamed you, my darling. I am an old man—I was then, but I would have taken you to my heart and sheltered you from all harm. It was selfish, it was foolish; I see it now—May and December—but old fool that I was, I thought you loved me, and would have been my pet, but he robbed me of my birdie. I knew his love would never outlive mine, and on that night when they left me for dead I swore to follow you, and when the time of trouble came to you to be near to help. I followed to the church where he made you his wife—"

She raised her eyes to his imploringly.

"Tell me the truth," she said, interrupting him; "was I really his lawful wife? He told me no; that the parson was no parson at all but a friend he had got to perform the ceremony, and Joe Einks, who was the only witness, would deny it all."

"Be quiet, darling," he said, gently, "and I will tell you all. I knew Joe was not to be depended on; he was as big a villain as the one who employed him. I was rich, and could buy as well as he. I did so, I paid him to assure his master I was dead, and that my body had been hidden by himself; that the blow he gave me proved fatal, and that he was in fact my murderer. With this secret in his possession he obtained money from Horace, whilst I paid him to give me all information respecting future events, holding over him the threat that when he failed me or deceived me I should immediately present myself to his master, and so stop any further resources from that quarter."

"But you have not told me if I was lawfully married," she asked, anxiously.

"You were," he replied. "I know the clergyman who officiated, and can produce him at any time should it be necessary."

"And you have been in England all this time!" she inquired.

"Yes, dear," was the reply. "Whilst he was kind to you, and you were happy, I remained quiet, as I did not blame him with respect to his father, well knowing had the old gentleman been aware he was wedded to a penniless girl he would have cut him off with a shilling. The letter you wrote to me when you were ill Joe brought to me, and received my instructions to deliver it at once. He had not wearied of you then, Ethel, and I knew it would make you happy, perhaps save your life, to see him."

"Oh, Ralph!" exclaimed the girl, "how could I have treated you as I did!"

"My darling," he said, "remember if you excite yourself I must go."

"Oh! I will be quiet," she replied; "but do tell me all."

"You left your house in Maida Vale," he replied, "and for some time I lost sight of you. Joe could not tell me of your whereabouts, and not knowing what had become of you I was miserable. But one evening he came across you in Regent Street; you were getting into a bus; he followed, but although he discovered you lived in the Old Kent Road, before he could let me know further you had left again."

"I remember," said Ethel; "it was a foggy night, and a man asked me to buy a little dog he was carrying, and I had an idea I knew the voice, but it was too dark to see his face."

"So Joe told me," replied Mr. Barton; "and it appears Mr. Langford was also most anxious to discover you at the same time, he being equally ignorant as to your departure from Maida Vale."

"Oh, Mr. Barton, how could he wonder! For weeks after my illness I was alone, without money, without friends. He left me with only a servant; and when I wrote, imploring him to come to me, he sent me a few pounds, telling me I had better take in lodgers, as I had no legal claim on him; and as he was going to be married we could never meet again, but he had given instructions to his solicitor to see that I was in some measure provided for."

"The villain!" cried Ralph Barton. "And so you left!"

"As soon as I could make the necessary arrangements I did so," she replied. "I would not accept his proffered help. I was young and well educated; and when I recovered from the first shock of his cruelty my spirit came to my aid, and I determined to seek a situation. For that purpose I applied to the Soho Bazaar, and it was not long before I obtained one of lady's maid. Being of French origin I determined to change my name, and took that of Josephine;" and then she related the events of the last few weeks, and how she discovered Miss Hazlewood's affianced husband to be none other than Horace Langford.

"And when is this marriage to take place?" asked Mr. Barton. "And have you heard where?"

"It was fixed for the 1st of February, and is to be solemnized at St. George's, Hanover-square," replied Ethel.

"And this is the 25th of January," said the old man. "Tell me one thing more, and then, darling, I must leave you, or the doctor will be scolding me. Do you still love this man?"

She could not answer for a moment, but the warm blood mantled her cheek, and stretching out her hands to him, with the tears rolling from her sad eyes,—

"I do, Ralph! I love him—oh! that I did not!"

"Enough!" said Mr. Barton, and he gently released the little hands, as bending low he kissed her as a father might a child, whilst a shadow of sorrow and disappointment passed over his face.

It was not lost upon the girl.

"Ralph," she said; "dear, kind Ralph, I have pained you; what an ingrate I am. Forgive me, but you asked, and I could not tell a lie."

"I know I did, my darling—my darling!" and, regardless of all, forgetting everything but his lost love, he buried his face in his hands, whilst his broad bosom heaved with the emotion he endeavoured to restrain; but he recovered himself as Dr. Joyce was announced, when, leaving him with his patient, he hurried from the room.

(Continued on page 427.)

ONLY the purest water is employed by the Chinese in washing the finer grades of silk. Ordinary well water in its natural state is unsuitable, and is purified by placing a quantity of molluscs in it for a day. They prey on any impure organic matter, and act as filters.

FOUND DROWNED.

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CHAPTER VIII.

GERALD could find no rest for the soles of his feet. At one time he was in London, another at Baronsford; now he was at Portsmouth, staying at the Pier Hotel with George Hewett, who is waiting for a ship.

He and George have been over to Ryde, and coming back in the steamer he was cordially accosted by Mr. Brown, the owner of *The Sylph*, Mr. Brown brimming over with good humour, and looking pinkier and shinier than ever.

"So glad to meet you again!" he cried, nearly wringing Gerald's arm off. "Come over here and have a chat. I have something to tell you. You and I are going to be relations. Did you know!"

"No, I was not aware of the fact," returned Gerald, stiffly.

"Well, I'm engaged to your cousin Nita—ha! ha! ha!" laughing with boisterous complacency. "We are to be married at once!"

"Oh, are you?"

"Yes. We have been engaged this six months!"

"Six months!" ejaculated his listener, incredulously.

"Yes; the day after that ball on the *Atlas* I popped, and was accepted. I used to think you were a little touched in that quarter too," he proceeded, with delicate playfulness. "But Nita said it was all nonsense, and you were only like brother and sister."

"She said that, did she?" with ominous calmness.

"To be sure she did."

"I can hardly believe you are engaged to her. I never heard a hint of it till now. You are not joking, are you?"

"Joking! My good man, I never was more serious in my life. The engagement was not given out, as Nita did not wish it. She wanted to have all her fun and flirting up to the last. She's the deuce at that, but there is to be an end to all those little amusements next month. Heavens, how she carried on with that Hungarian count—admirably—and half-a-dozen others. I just used to roar over the stories she told me afterwards of how she lured them on, and what they said," he concluded, boastfully.

"Can you show me some proof of your engagement, Mr. Brown? Excuse me, but I should like to be convinced by my eyes as well as my ears."

"Well, look here," with a knowing chuckle, "see this is her last letter. You may read the top line," unfolding a much ornamented and scented missive.

"My own darling Thomas!"

"Yes, you see it's her writing; and here's her signature. Now are you convinced? And I'll show you something extra. Here," taking off his glove, and thrusting out a podgy little finger embellished by a turquoise ring containing one large, single stone, "there's her own ring! Do you see?"

Gerald did see; he saw that it was the identical ring he had sent her the day after their last meeting, the outward symbol of their own betrothal. No further proof was necessary.

"Now, you unbelieving Jew, will you come to the wedding?"

Gerald made a faint excuse, but the words were taken out of his mouth by his companion.

"Ah! true. I heard you had trouble at home—your wife, a daughter of old Sladen. Queer old beggar! I knew him. Very eccentric—mad, I thought. Girl odd, too—eh! Well, I'll see you again. Here we are—by-bye. Look me up some day soon—old quarters!"

Nita's marriage was a terrible blow to Gerald, not that he expected her to remain single for his sake—such an idea never entered his head—but to have been engaged all the time to Brown! Brown, of whom she made a butt—Brown

whom she ridiculed and mimicked—was indeed a bitter awakening. His idol was but clay, and had fallen to the ground and been shattered in the fall.

"There is no woman worth a thought; no not one! They are all empty-headed, deceitful, heartless, and hateful!" Such was his verdict as day after day he brooded over his past.

But he was roused out of himself by sudden news from Baronsford. A telegram came to George Hewett, which he unwittingly opened in Gerald's presence, and his sudden change of countenance and exclamation of horror made him snatch it from his friend's detaining hand and read it for himself. It ran as follows:—"John Evans, Bailiff, to Lieut. G. Hewett.—The body has been found. Break the news to Mr. Le Marchant, and bring him home without delay."

When Gerald read the telegram, he being still far from strong, and much shaken by the extraordinary and trying events of the last few months, his nerves and mind alike being completely unstrung, he sat down at the table, leant his head on his arms, and sobbed like a child.

"I drove her to it!" he declared over and over again to his friend, as they journeyed up to town in the night express. "I drove her to it by my neglect and selfishness! I am the cause of her death, though I had no direct hand in it—it lies at my door! She was the sacrifice offered up to our family altar by her grandfather and accepted, and murdered by me!"

In vain were his friend's remonstrances. Excuses, consolations—were unavailing.

Gerald was actually beside himself with self-reproach and remorse; he would see no one—he would speak to no one when he reached home. All arrangements, all details, were left in the hands of George Hewett.

The body had been carried to the Baronsford Arms to await the inquest. Although the features were quite undistinguishable, the clothes, hair, and jewellery were identified, and sworn to by many witnesses.

The wedding-ring and guard were taken to Gerald, and he recognised them with a shudder, as the rings he had placed upon his little bride's fingers barely six months previously.

The long velvet and fur wrap was also shown to him—sadden, but still recognisable. He dismissed it from his sight with a gesture of horror, and George interfered and prevented any further tokens of the dead being thrust under the notice of her sufficiently unhappy husband.

A coroner and jury of twelve men, according to law and custom, assembled, and sat on the body, and, after a very short interval, returned the verdict of "Found Drowned."

And then due preparations were made for the funeral, which was attended by enormous crowds come from far and near, chiefly instigated by their own curiosity.

Ina was not to lie in the musty old family vault, among dead and gone Le Marchants, but was to be laid in a cheerful, sunny spot in the graveyard surrounding the venerable church.

She was buried on a lovely spring morning, and had the largest funeral remembered or seen in that part of the world for years.

Old Sir Richard came over to it (and took the opportunity to borrow largely from his son).

Several of Mr. Sladen's married friends came down, filled with doubt and smothered suspicions of some very mysterious foul play; but their minds were set at rest as far as Gerald was concerned. His unaffected misery struck every eye, and filled the most careless lookers-on with compassion as they gazed on the chief mourner, who was the centre of everyone's attention as he walked alone behind the coffin, and saw the remains of Ina Le Marchant—as he believed—consigned to their last resting-place.

Directly after the funeral Baronsford was shut up, and the servants dismissed, but not before very startling rumours of ghostly piano-playing and black figures of doubtful origin had circulated in the neighbourhood.

No servant-maid ventured upstairs alone after dusk. No, no, they went in a body. No one

cared to venture into the morning-room nor her bed-room—which two apartments remained undisturbed, and exactly as she left them, by Mr. Le Marchant's imperative orders.

Gerald was overwhelmed with remorse. The place, the lands, all ransomed by her money, were hateful to him. He himself was hateful—everything was hateful. In his frame of mind there was no remedy like the sea, thought George Hewett; and, using all his influence, he persuaded his friend to resume his profession—for a time, at any rate.

Gerald grasped the idea with energy—worked might and main to get an appointment, and succeeded; and early in June he (and his friend George sailed once more as shipmates for a long, long cruise in the Chinese seas.

Previous to their departure a magnificent white marble monument had been erected to Ina over the Le Marchant's pew in Baronsford church. It represented the figure of a young girl, life-size, and bearing a strong likeness to her in whose name it was raised.

Underneath was inscribed:—

"INA LE MARCHANT,

"Died December, 1875. Aged eighteen years."
"I believe in the Resurrection of the Dead."

And now to follow the fortunes of Ina, or as she chose to call herself, Agnes. A long night's rest refreshed her wonderfully, and early next morning she started, bag in hand, for a large cathedral town, about six miles from Maxton, there intending to take the train for London.

She walked on bravely through the muddy roads and lanes, occasionally stopping to rest her bag on a bank or milestone, and meeting with nothing more sensational than a few great, empty waggons lumbering sleepily along.

But another adventure was in store for her, though not of the appalling description of her last. When about two miles from her destination she suddenly came round a corner, and heard loud and angry barking, and shrill and frightened screams. The screams proceeded from a very stout old lady, clad in a long seal-skin coat, who had climbed on to the top of a bank, and was making feeble pokes and blows at a huge black and tan collie dog, who was barking furiously, and making now and then sudden, very alarming rushes at the terrified old dame. He seemed half in jest, half in earnest, and was worrying her, and bustling from side to side as if she were an obstreperous and self-opinionated sheep.

"Help! help! my good girl!" she cried, as she beheld Ina's welcome approach. "Keep him off!"

It was easier said than done; but Ina was not a timid girl where animals were concerned. Seizing a stick, or more properly a bit of broken branch, she belaboured the astonished sheep-dog with such boldness and good will that, completely cowed by her blows and bravery, he fled down the road, yelping with his tail between his legs.

"Now come and give me a hand down," said the old lady, imperatively, having evidently ascended to her vantage ground with an agility stimulated by pressing danger.

"Ah!" she added, as, leaning heavily on Ina, she slowly crept down. "Ah! I'm obliged to you—very much obliged to you. I believe that brute of a dog would have torn me to pieces; I expected him to fly at my throat every second. You soon beat him off. I don't know how you dared. What's your name?" she asked, authoritatively, casting a sharp glance over Ina's very plain and old-fashioned costume, which was that of a respectable servant, or a tradesman's daughter.

"My name"—stammered Ina—"my name is Agnes Merchant."

"And who are you? Where are you going? Where do you come from?" proceeded the old lady, without one full-stop. "I want to know all about you, that I may try and do you some good turn on your side."

"I am a stranger in this part of the world, and

I am going into Wallchester to take the train to London."

"Are you going home to your people?" persisted her companion, now trudging along beside her in the mud.

"No."

"Are you out of place—in want of a situation?"

"No."

"Come, don't be so short in your answers, young woman! I'm one you can trust, and I'm taken with your face. As you won't tell me a word about yourself, I'll just set you a good example. My name is Mrs. Monks; I am a widow woman staying down in my native town, on a short visit, and as I can't bear sticking in the house all day I always take a good long country tramp to give me a healthy appetite. I live near Torcaster when I am at home, and have a good big place, and a fine establishment of servants; and I was thinking that as Emily, my maid, is going to be married, I should just like a nice, quiet, genteel, little girl like you to take her place."

"But I know nothing of the duties of a lady's maid."

"You can knock at a door, and bring up a can of hot water, can't you, or a cup of tea? You can fold away dresses and petticoats, and brush out my scanty locks of hair, eh?"

"Yes, I could do that."

"You can learn, can't you?"

"Yes, extremely well, and I am good at all needlework."

"Then there you are! You have not to rouge, and pad, and powder, and curl me. Only see that my caps are straight and my gown fastened. Twenty-five pounds a year and a comfortable home. What do you say?"

"I say that I should be very glad, indeed, to take your offer; but—but about references. I have none; in fact, to be plain with you, and trusting that you won't betray me, I must tell you that I am at this moment running away from home, and from all my belongings in the world!"

"Eh, dear! dear! dear!" said the old lady, stopping in the middle of the road, and surveying her young companion with eager, searching little eyes. "And what mischief have you been after?"

"None—I have done nothing; but, nevertheless, I could not stay. I would tell you all, indeed I would, but dare not do so at present. When I am safely away perhaps I will write."

"Tell me, child, two things: are you going to friends?"

"No, I am not. I don't know where I am going. I only want to get away from—from him, as far as possible."

"Oh! there's a man at the bottom of it, of course. Tell me, on your word of honour, have you done anything shameful or disgraceful that ought to prevent you from coming under my roof? Look me straight in the face, now!"

"I give you my sacred assurance I have not!" returned Ina, firmly, gazing back steadily into the old lady's questioning eyes.

"Very well, then; you come home with me. Much better be under my care than tramping about the world. Some time I daresay you will tell me all. Here we are in the town, now. I am staying at the Rose Hotel. My brother used to keep it. No, I'm not a lady-born. Oh! dear, no! Many a hard day's work I did as a girl when I was your age, but my husband was a clever—terribly clever—man, and invented a patent that made him one of the richest men in Torcaster. Torcaster, that's near where I live, and I have neither chick nor child, and maybe you were put in my way as a sort of makeshift. Well, we'll see how you turn out, and how we get on together. As long as you tell the truth and do your duty you will have a friend in Mary Monks. Now, here's the Rose, and you are my new maid, and we will see about a room for you, and some dinner. To-morrow I am going home, and this afternoon you can collect my things and try your hand at packing."

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. MONKS was quite right when she said she had "a comfortable home and a fine establishment of servants." She lived in a splendid house in the suburbs of Torchester, and kept a carriage and pair, six maids, and two gardeners.

Gardening was her hobby, and she spent half the day pottering in her greenhouses or grubbing about the beds with a small trowel.

Ina was allowed to take her meals alone, so was spared the society of the six very smart-looking maids, who, far from resenting her unusual indulgences, treated her with wonderful consideration. They had detected at the very first glance that, although she was plainly and even poorly clad, and was most willing to assume all the duties of her humble sphere, that she was a *lady born*. Her voice, her manner of speaking, her small hands, her dainty underlinen, all pointed to the indisputable fact.

Ina, with the elasticity of eighteen, and the resolution inherited from her grandfather, speedily made the best of her situation, and felt truly thankful to have found so speedily such a safe and secret harbour of refuge. She was becoming more and more of a companion to Mrs. Monks; she not only darned her lace and stockings with deft, convent-taught fingers, but she answered notes, she read aloud—novels on week-days, sermons on Sundays; she also skimmed the daily paper for her patroness, who afterwards read it at her leisure in the evening, as she loved her paper second only to her *teapot*.

Ina always read out the births, marriages, and deaths, the heads of news, the leading article, any specially startling fire or murder, and, above all, the agony column.

She had great difficulty in keeping her countenance and steadying her voice when she came to the following. She took it over and read it in the window, with her face turned away, and in a low and hurried tone:—

"FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD. — Missing from her home since Christmas Day, a young married lady, aged eighteen, has pale complexion, hair tightly drawn off from her face, in colour light brown; grey eyes; small mole on forehead; when last seen was dressed in long black velvet paludot, shaped to figure, trimmed with Russian sable; black dress with wide *crêpe* tucks; black *crêpe* and jet hat; and carried in her hand a leather dressing-bag. Is supposed to have gone to France. Anyone giving reliable information of her whereabouts to Messrs. Cook and Crindale, 177, Cromwell Buildings, Strand, will receive the above reward."

"Dear me! show me that," said Mrs. Monks, wiping her glasses withunction, and stretching out a hand towards the paper. "Who can she be? Some lady of title, eh? Run off with her lover as likely as not. Russian sables and five hundred pounds reward. Shows she belongs to vastly wealthy people. She must have been something like you," said the old lady conning over the notice with an eager eye, "only for the dress. Strange that you should be taking French leave about the same time," observed this particularly dense, stupid old woman.

She had no imagination. It never dawned upon her that there was such a thing as getting rid of clothes likely to be identified. She looked upon Ina as what she professed to be—a very quiet, amiable, clever girl of the middle classes.

Month after month went by, and every day Ina became even necessary to her patroness; every day she spent more time in her society; she had now arrived at taking her meals in her company, and occasionally giving her a little drive.

One day Ina was dusting some pet ornaments which stood on the long-closed piano, and she suddenly asked if she might open and dust the instrument.

"To be sure! Dust away, my dear, dust away!"

Ina lingered over her task for a long time, for it was a labour of love—so long that Mrs. Monks said,—

"You are taking such trouble with the inside,

one would think it was a living creature. May be you can play! Can you?"

"I can."

"Well, give us a tune. Sit down; there's the stool."

Only too delighted, Ina did "give her a tune"—nay, several tunes. The old lady was thunder-struck. She came over and watched the plying, slender, but certain fingers with wide open incredulous eyes.

When Ina had finished up a long bravura with a silvery clear run, half-a-dozen chords, and a pause, she said,—

"Why, you're a professional!"

"No, ma'am, I am not."

"Then you are a governess."

"Yet, as you have been so forbearing and so good to me, I will tell you who I really am."

And standing up and moving over to the fireplace, she commenced her story, told of her early years in England shut up in a nursery, of her school days in France, her grandfather's home, her marriage.

"Married! You!" cried Mrs. Monks, with uplifted hands. "And who are you?" tragically.

"I am Mrs. Le Marchant of Baronsford."

"Come, come, come, Agnes, this won't do. This is all a cock-and-a-bull story made up on the spot."

"It is not," returned Ina, indignantly; "it is true."

"Well, young woman, I suppose you know best," very ironically; "but you recollect the girl that was advertised for last January, five hundred pounds reward?"

"Yes, and that was me," replied Ina, firmly.

"Was it? Then you look uncommonly like flesh and blood, considering that your body was found in the river two months later."

"My body!" gasped Ina, in a tone of incredulous horror.

"Yes, yours; dressed as described—coat, hat, rings, appearance, all sworn to, although you had been under the ice for nearly three months. You had a grand funeral after the inquest, and I hear your husband was beside himself with grief, and he has erected a magnificent monument to you in Baronsford Church before he went to sea. So now—very angrily—"don't tell me any of your lies again!" concluding with an impressive nod.

Ina was petrified, and looked it. So the mad girl had drowned herself, and was buried in her name; and now she, Inez Le Marchant, was dead and buried as much as if she really and truly lay in the grave—dead to Gerald, dead to all who had ever known her. Here, indeed, was a more effectual concealment than any at which she had ever aimed.

Going down on her knees she hid her face in Mrs. Monks' lap, and told her without interruption the whole astonishing story. Her tears, her words, bore the stamp of truth, and Mrs. Monks sat in her arm-chair a convinced woman—convinced still more when Ina produced her travelling bag, her jewellery, a prayer-book, and Bible, with her name and a little photograph of Baronsford.

"I heard the whole story from my niece, Sophy. She lives at Oldfield Hall, close by."

"Do you mean Mrs. Vincent?" asked Ina, eagerly.

"To be sure I do! She told me all about it, and all the excitement, and trouble, and work, and talk there has been; and to think—to think of your being here all the time, under my very own roof, beats everything! Well, and what will you do now, Mrs.—Mrs.—Le Marchant—Lord, how funny it sounds!—go back!"

"Never—never!" returned Ina, hastily. "I will stay with you, if you will keep my secret, and keep me!"

"Keep you, my darling girl! That I will; and you shall be as my own flesh and blood from this day forth. Between grandfather and husband you have had a bad time. Your husband was a hard, stern, unfeeling man. You are well rid of him."

"Oh, don't say anything against him, please,—please!" said Ina, becoming crimson. "His was a cruel fate, worse, far worse, than mine! For the sake of his family he had to renounce

his liberty, his profession, and the girl he loved, and to take me."

"Well! and I don't pity him. You are not to be despised; you will be a handsome girl some of these days, when you fill out a bit, and what's better, you are a good girl—too good for him!" with a scornful sniff. "Never tell me! You were an orphan, thrown on his mercy, without kith or kin."

"He tried to do his best," faltered Ina.

"His best was *bad*, I've no patience. My mouth is as dry as a bone with talking, and my head is just whizzing with excitement. Ring the bell, my darling girl; ring for Bennett and the tea."

Four years have now passed away, during which Agnes and her adopted mother lived most happily together. Agnes was treated in every way as the daughter of the house, and she became so fond of Mrs. Monks, and so thoroughly at home in her new character, that at times she could hardly realize that the past was not a dream. She made many friends, chiefly young girls of her own age, and old married ladies, Mrs. Monks' contemporaries. She went to parties, to dances, to balls; every summer they went to the seaside, and every autumn they spent at least six weeks abroad, and thus increased their knowledge of the world, and their circle of acquaintances. Paris, they never visited, in deference to Agnes' most urgent wishes to avoid that gay and giddy capital, and the chances of meeting old friends.

But she need not have been uneasy. No one would have recognized Inez Le Marchant in Agnes Merchant. In the first place, she had grown taller, her figure had fulfilled Mrs. Monks' predictions, and her face bore out her father's promise. She was exceedingly graceful in all her movements, she had acquired confidence and manner, and was known in Torchester, and in many other places, as the "pretty Miss Merchant."

She was more than pretty—she was lovely. A creamy complexion, with faintly tinted cheeks, was the result of plenty of air, exercise, and early hours. Almost her greatest beauty was the shape of her face, the delicate lines of her cheek and brow, and the small delicately cut lips and nostrils.

Her hair, now quite a decided brown, was worn in a thick curly fringe, instead of being drawn off her forehead, and completely altered the character of her expression, and concealed the mole on her forehead.

She looked classical, well-born—nay, nobly born—as she lay back in a very easy fauteuil one morning, listening to her "auntie," as she called her, reading a letter. She was dressed in perfection of taste, in a soft cream foularde of evident French make; her arms were clasped behind her head, and she was evidently giving her whole attention to some weighty matter, for her eyes were bent on the ground with an expression of the gravest deliberation.

"You see, Sophy thinks it very odd I never go near her now, and I used to go so regularly before your day, and, naturally, she puts it all on your shoulders; and, goodness knows, she is jealous enough of you as it is!"

"Well, auntie, then suppose we go!"

"If you don't mind going back into the neighbourhood, my dear—we must think of that. As to any one knowing you again, that's impossible. I never saw anyone alter so much. You are no more like the little awkward, thin, pale, slip of a girl that beat off that brute of a collier than I am myself!" gazing admiringly at the imperial young woman in the armchair. "He is not there," dropping her voice; "I made particular inquiries—he is still at sea, and there is no talk of his coming home, although that old black guard, his father, is dead!"

"Oh, auntie, feel what a word!"

"Well, black[^]eg, if you like it better! The coast is clear, so what do you say! Shall we go?"

"Supposing he were to come back and recognise me," suggested Ina, suddenly sitting erect.

"Bless the girl! are you not dead and

turied this five years nearly, done with, and, I'll be bound, forgotten!"

"Ay, very true, forgotten years ago," echoed Ina, bitterly, then continued,—

"And—*if*—*if*—Sir Gerald Le Marchant comes home a widower, as everyone believes (himself inclu'd), and marries again—what then?"

"Oh, sufficient unto the day. Time enough when he is home, and is going to be married again, to settle all that. Now what shall I say to Sophy?"

"Then on your head be it," returned Ina, impressively. "Say we will go. Accept with pleasure. Stay, I'll write for you, as usual, but"—rising and walking towards the writing table—"dear old lady, I have a presentiment that this will be an eventful visit to me. Something is going to happen. I feel it within myself, but whether it is good or bad I don't know—I wish I did."

"Rubbish! you are full of fancies this morning. What could happen? unless a railway accident going there, which Heaven forbid. I tell you that he is safe over the seas, and has as much notion of coming home as I have of getting married!"

Mrs. Vincent (Sophy) was a fast married woman, who liked society, dress, and admiration, and generally had her house filled with "dear friends"—male and female—of her own set.

She had always considered that she was her Aunt Mary's heiress until this interloper, this beggar-girl, this insolent adventurer—Agnes Merchant—had unexpectedly stepped in.

But she was not going to release her claim without a struggle. She would have her aunt and her companion on a visit, reinstate herself once more in her relative's good graces, and ferret out something about her rival's past. On that subject she had set her heart, and centred all her—by no means despicable—energies.

The guests at Oldfield, when our friends arrived, were two very fashionable sisters, the Misses Clipperton, given to slang, romping, hunting (not that I think that anything to condemn), card-playing and flirting.

Then there was our former belle, Nita, now a widow—Mrs. Windsor Browne—a widow of a year's standing, and quite consolable.

Mr. Browne and Nita had not "got on"—oh, dear no. He had a temper, blustering and loud as Boreas, and she still flirted away as much as ever, and he did not see the humour of the situation.

Now once she was actually Mrs. Browne Mrs. R. went to the very borders of impropriety, coquetted with scandal, and snapped her fingers in her angry spouse's pink face.

So when he died—which he did, quite suddenly of blood-poisoning—it was found that his gay, pretty little widow was left a mere paltry annuity of four-hundred pounds a year, and the bulk of his property went to a large impecunious family of Brown-Browns.

Nita was beside herself with rage. She walked up and down her room the day of the funeral in a transport of passion, with her nice flibbert nails dug into the very palms of her pretty little hands.

He had often threatened her with a scanty jointure, and his threat had been fulfilled. What was four hundred pounds a year to her! Beggary! Why the lace in her last evening dress alone cost two hundred pounds.

She walked over to the glass and looked at herself with a long, exhaustive stare.

Yes, she was still pretty, very pretty, though rapidly approaching thirty.

Another rich husband must be her remedy for the evil that had befallen her.

If the worst came to the worst there was Gerald. Ay! she could not do much better. He was now Sir Gerald Le Marchant, with a free and unencumbered rent-roll, handsome as Phœbus, blindly in love with her as in days of old—what could be more fitting!

Yes, she would write to him at once, and renew their long-lapsed correspondence. And all these schemes were thought of by Mrs. Browne

before her husband, "her own darling Thomas," had actually been six hours under the sod!

Besides the widow and the young ladies there were several other guests at Oldfield, Captain Handcock, a needy, fashionable dandy, looking for a rich wife, and thinking seriously of Nita, whose poverty had not been made public.

There was a young lord, who admired Ina, having met her abroad; and the more she snubbed and repelled his advances the more enamoured he became; and there were two London men, friends of Mr. Vincent's, very well off, very much bored with everything, and very much impressed with a sense of their own importance; their names were Mr. Nash and Colonel Neville.

Then there was Mr. Vincent, who was a rough elderly man, who prided himself on speaking his mind on all occasions, and considered that rudeness and wit were synonymous; also that a certain hearty and bluff manner was ample assurance to the world at large that he was a right good fellow.

He was as great a gossip as any old woman in the parish, and revelled in a highly-spiced anecdote.

So much for the inmates of Oldfield when our heroine joined the family circle.

CHAPTER X.

It is the ladies' half-hour after dinner, and the guests at Oldfield are yawning through that—to them—weary time save and except Ina, who in a retired seat, somewhat aloof, is interested in a book of photographs, and nursing a pet kitten.

"What is that place at the back of the hill, Sophy?" asked Miss Mossy Clipperton, languidly; "we drove past. Great big gates, you know, and swell house in distance."

"Oh, that's Baronsford, our show country seat."

"And who lives there?"

"It belonged to old Sir Richard Le Marchant, and he is dead; and now it belongs to his son Gerald, but no one lives there."

"Why! Is it haunted? Do tell us all about it, my dear."

"I can give you every information, young ladies," put in Nita. "Sir Richard was my uncle—a terrible old man! He spent, and he spent, and he spent, and mortgaged the whole place, and ruined the property; but his son regained the estate, and a fine fortune to boot, by marrying the mortgagee's daughter. It was her or beggary, and he chose her—by all accounts, a bitter pill to swallow, hideously ugly, half French, and half witted."

"Pleasing, alluring picture!" cried Mossy, whilst Ina sat in her corner spell-bound, her large dark eyes fastened on Mrs. Browne, the book of photos unheeded on the floor.

"Well, after the wedding they came to Baronsford, and lived there, but not happily. Whether he ill-treated her or she made herself unbearable I know not, but one Christmas Day she was missing, and, after a search of months, her body was found in the river, and had a mighty grand funeral. Since then no one has lived at Baronsford. They say she haunts it, and that in the evenings she may be heard playing away at her grand piano by the hour. She played splendidly, nearly as well as Miss Merchant there."

Ina started.

"But it was not because of the ghost that your cousin left?"

"Oh, dear no; nothing of the kind. He felt the whole thing so dreadfully, was most terribly cut up about it, that he just went straight away to sea, and has never been home since. But he is coming back very shortly."

Ina's heart gave a wild bound.

"He will be the desire and ambition of all the girls in the county and the match-making mammae, b-ing rich, and well born, and young," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Do you think he would do for me?" said Mossy, playfully. "Do put in a good word for

me, Mrs. Vincent, when you see him, and have him over here to meet me."

"He would do very nicely, Mossy," exclaimed Nita, rather sharply; "but you need not think of him. I reserve my cousin Gerald for—"

"For whom—come!" cried a duet of treble voices.

"For myself. I was his first flame, and I fancy I shall be his last. En reviert toujours a les premiers amours," she added, complacently.

"That does not apply to sailors! I advise you not to reckon on him too confidently," said Mossy, who was rather ruffled. "Sailors are proverbially fickle. They have a sweetheart in every port, if not a wife."

"True; but Gerald is constancy itself. He actually wanted me to wait four years for him. He is the exception that proves the rule."

"Well, I must say," said Miss Clipperton, "that I don't see why you should annex him so promptly. You have had your turn. You have been married once. Give the girls a chance—Mossy, and Miss Merchant, and me. Miss Merchant," raising her voice, and addressing Ina, who was listening in pale dismay to this summary disposal of her husband, "I say, Miss Merchant, how would you like to be Lady Le Marchant?"

Little, little did they guess that the coveted title was already hers.

A shake of the head was the only reply she could make. To speak a syllable was out of her power. She was wrought up to such a tension of excitement and nervousness that she felt that on the smallest provocation she would burst into tears.

"Tell me, is he susceptible, Nita?" inquired Mossy, judiciously.

"No, I never saw him the least bit spoony on any girl but myself. I was his first and only love," with a conscious laugh, warming a pretty little foot on the fender, and gazing at herself affectionately in the glass.

"Here come the men at last," exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, with a sigh of relief. "What do you say, girls! Shall we have a round game—nap or poker?"

The following afternoon, as the men were all out shooting, it was suggested that the ladies should go over to Baronsford and inspect the house and grounds, and have a chat with the housekeeper, and find out when the master was coming home. This they did not actually say was a part of their errand, but it was, in reality, their chief object in view.

Mrs. Monks, a capital pedestrian for her years, Mrs. Vincent, the two Miss Clippertons, Nita and Ina, formed the party.

Ina and Mrs. Vincent were leading the way, and the former felt a curious thrill as the familiar pile came in sight.

"How quickly you walk, Miss Merchant, and what an eye you have for short cuts. Anyone would almost fancy that you had been here before!"

Nita felt her face becoming crimson, and she earnestly hoped that her companion did not notice her sudden confusion.

At the entrance they were all received by Mrs. North, now permanent housekeeper, more garrulous, more portly, and more majestic in her appearance than ever.

With the air of a queen introducing new realms to her subjects, she led the way through the lofty hall, suite of drawing-rooms, through the bare picture gallery, into the private chapel, and up the winding staircase into various stately bedrooms. Spite of its grandeur, the empty echoing house was exceedingly gloomy and depressing.

"This," she said, producing a key from her bunch and unlocking a door with much ceremony "was Lady Le Marchant's room"—waving her hand. "We don't show it to everybody, but you, Mrs. Vincent, are no stranger, you know. It is left exactly as she quitted it, by Sir Gerald's orders. Just dusted, nothing touched."

"Dear me, how romantic!" said Miss Clipperton, with a giggle, as she tripped over to the dressing-table.

"Yes, not a chair has been stirred," proceeded Mrs. North, in a solemn tone, and assuming a



INA SAT IN HER CORNER SPELL BOUND, HER LARGE, DARK EYES FASTENED ON MRS. BROWN.

lugubrious expression. "Her dresses," opening a wide-winged wardrobe—"are all here still. See, this was the dinner dress she wore last," dragging out a black silk net—"this was her visiting costume" producing a (familiar to Ina) dress, profusely garnished with ostrich feather trimming.

"Shut them up, they give me the creeps," cried Nita, shrugging her shoulders. "I shall soon talk Gerald out of all such sentimental nonsense, and make him sell them to some old-clothes people I know, who give excellent prices, and her jewellery he shall give to me."

"You were always up to all that kind of thing, Miss Nita," said Mrs. North, "and you ought to use your influence with Sir Gerald in more ways than one, but I'm thinking that even you won't make him open these rooms."

"Was she—was the body laid out here?" asked Miss Clipperton, in an awed tone.

"Oh, no bless you, no! She was never brought home. She was laid out at 'The Arms,' down in the village, the nearest place to where she was found."

"She was a long time in the water," pursued Miss Mossy. "Did she look much altered?" with an evident craving for ghastly details.

"She was a shocking sight. You could only tell she was a human being by her clothes and her long hair. I went down to the inn and saw her with my own two eyes, and I have never got the sight out of my mind since. I'd give ten pounds if I had not gone."

"Was her husband in great grief?" inquired Mossy.

"I could not have believed it was in him to have taken it so much to heart. He was just down right distracted over it, and when she was alive he never made very much of her. I think that partly preyed on his mind. This is her morning room," ushering the party into a large cheerful apartment, hung with blue. "Just as she left it, you see. The piano open, and her very gloves on it, laid down as she took them off. She was a grand player."

"So I have been told, but I never heard her; indeed, I only saw her twice," said Mrs. Vincent walking to the window. "She haunts the place, they say, don't they?"

"Oh, they talk a lot of trash and nonsense, and make up a pack of stories about her stealing downstairs in the dark, and playing here in the twilight by the hour."

"Have you ever heard or seen anything yourself?" asked Miss Mossy, with bated breath.

"I've heard the piano, that I will allow, but I've never seen anything worse than myself, and I'm up and down late and early."

"When do you expect Sir Gerald?" asked Nita abruptly, changing the conversation.

"Any day. He may walk in to-morrow, and he may not come near us for months. The last letter we got was from Malta."

"Oh, then in that case he may be here, as you say, any day," said Nita, cheerfully. "Now, suppose you get us some tea, Mrs. North—tea in the library"—leading the way. "Send it in as soon as you can. I"—throwing herself into an easy chair and looking about her complacently—"I will do the honours. Nice old place, is it not, girls? Is it not, Miss Merchant? and the master is to match. If ever I am mistress here we shall have stirring times, I can tell you. Balls, dinners, theatricals, and no end of fun. Consider yourselves invited," with a comprehensive wave of her hand.

"Are you not reckoning without your host?" said Mrs. Monks, very pointedly.

"Oh, not I—my presentiments always come true. You don't know Gerald; my will is law with him—he thinks the sun rises and sets exclusively in my person," patting herself. "That's the proper sort of feeling that a man should have, is it not, Miss Merchant? Lord Daverall has the same high opinion of you. How silent you have been all the afternoon!" suddenly noticing Ina's pale cheeks. "Are you ill—or what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever," returned Ina with an enormous effort; and summing up a

ghostly smile, and launched into conversation with the elder Miss Clipperton on the subject of the curiously-carved old chimney-piece and doors, and some old and dark-browed family portraits.

"There's a picture, the model of Sir Gerald!" said Mrs. North, escorting the tea-things as a body guard and resuming the part of cicerone. "That one between the windows, of a cavalier, Sir Humphrey le Marchant, killed at Marston Moor. He has the very same features, the same grave eyes and handsome mouth and chin. Only for the long hair it might be Sir Gerald's own portrait; but he—he do have his hair cropped close! Dear me! dear me! it will be a sight for sore eyes to see him back again!"

"What will you say if he brings a new mistress?" said Mrs. Vincent.

"Well, unless a China woman, he can't well suit himself out there. But I should be glad to see a lady here again—a grown-up, capable mistress—not a child like the last. Yes, we would all be glad to see Sir Gerald bring home a Lady Le Marchant, for he is the very last living member of the old name and the old family."

(To be continued.)

A STEAM yacht was once constructed with propellers on the principle of the awan's foot. The progress of the boat was quite satisfactory, and the propellers would have been a success were it not for the fact that, the experiment being made in the Thames, they were continually interfered with by weeds and floating wood.

This postal service of the Emperor of Japan is more than ten times as great as it was before the war with China began. There is not a city in the civilised world from which he does not receive letters in these days. Many of his correspondents seem to think that through him they can gain an entrance to the Japanese markets. The number of inventions of all kinds offered him for sale enormous.



"BUT PEOPLE DO MEET UNEXPECTEDLY SOMETIMES. DO YOU SEE THAT MAN OVER THERE?" SAID ROSAMOND.

THE ASPENDALE PROPERTY.

CHAPTER XVII.

PERHAPS two lovers had never been in such a painfully bewildering position as Rosamond Hurst and Frank Dangerfield when they had read Mr. Carley's telegram.

To take Frank's side first. He loved Rosamond with all the passion of his nature; the long delay between his meeting her in April and his discovering her when he visited his friend at Adelaide House had only intensified his affection. The weeks when Tempest had lain dangerously ill and Frank had performed been thrown into close daily intercourse with the two sisters had strengthened and confirmed it. Even Rosamond's point-blank rejection had not reduced him to despair, since he felt positive she cared for him, and only sent him away for some girlish scruple he hoped later on to be able to overcome, and now they met again.

He read his welcome in her sweet true eyes. She accepted his help in her trouble; finally she told him the reason of her former rejection, and he found that so far from there being anything disgraceful in her history, she was his equal in rank and family.

Poor Frank would have been in the seventh heaven of delight but that with the discovery came the news of Rosamond's terrible trouble.

How could he expect her to rejoice in his love when such a mystery overhung her sister's fate! how could he expect her to have a thought for their own happiness when pretty childish Moira had disappeared!

His was a generous nature, and he tried loyally to push all thought of self aside, and only think of the missing girl.

And Rosamond!

Through all her agony of uncertainty about her sister's fate, she was conscious of an intense relief. The barrier between herself and Frank was

broken. He knew her secret now, and did not despise her.

It was as though, poor girl, instead of standing alone in a sea of difficulties a champion had come forth to serve her. Only the women who have had to act the part of leading spirit in their families, and have borne the burden of deciding every difficult question, can understand what it was to Rosamond to suddenly have the burden lifted from her slender shoulders, and to have someone on whom to lean for help and counsel.

"What are we to do?" she asked sadly, "my train goes at six o'clock, yet I can't bear to go home and feel I have done nothing, that I have not made an effort to find my darling."

Frank Dangerfield pressed her hand tenderly; in a London street it was the only demonstration possible to him. Besides, poor fellow, he could hardly call himself an accepted lover even yet; Rosamond had trusted him with her secret, which was a hopeful sign, but he dared not urge his suit now. He could not press his courtship while this awful uncertainty hung over his sweetheart's sister.

"Let me come down to Netherton with you," he said, on an inspiration, "we can't possibly make any plan before six o'clock. I need not be any trouble to your mother, I can go to an hotel; we might think of something in the train."

"It would be giving you a lot of trouble."

"A trouble to be with you?" he said, audaciously, "you make a great mistake if you can think that. Besides, my work is over for the week, and I can come back early on Monday. Charles Tempest will be glad of a visit from me; you can put my sudden journey down to anxiety for him if you like."

Rosamond shook her head.

"I can't think, I can't reason; I only know that my brain feels on fire. Perhaps when I am safe at home I shall think of a dozen plans for finding Moira, but just now my mind is a blank. . . . If you come to Netherton, perhaps you can

help me decide how much to tell mother; it will kill her if she hears the truth."

"She must not know it," said Frank, decisively, "now, we will talk of that later. At present you are just tired out, and I am going to take you to have some food; you won't help your sister by breaking down; besides," with a tender accent, "you have given me the right to take care of you."

"I haven't," said Rosamond, mendaciously, but she blushed the next minute.

"We will talk of that another time," said Frank, gently. "I won't worry you now, only Rosamond, you do trust me, don't you? You will give me a brother's right to help you in finding Moira!"

"Moira always liked you!" said Rosamond, and with this very moderate encouragement poor Dangerfield had to be content.

He had neither sisters nor girl cousins. Until he knew Rosamond he had never cared for feminine companionship, and so it came about that this was the very first time he had ever taken a lady to lunch at a public restaurant. He chose the nearest, because he felt from Rosamond's weary steps and pale face she was really incapable of much more effort. It was a large establishment, the long inner room being well supplied with little tables, settees, and velvet-covered chairs, while ferns and pot flowers gave a look of freshness and grace to the scene.

Usually at this hour it would have been crowded with tea-drinkers, but being Saturday there were only a few people, and the lovers had no difficulty in securing a table to themselves. Frank ordered soup and champagne, when Rosamond shook her head over his extravagance. He told her it was the finest pick-me-up he knew of, and that he wanted to drink success to their quest.

At first Rosamond declared she was too tired to eat anything; but a few mouthfuls of soup brought back her colour to her cheeks, and by the time she had drunk a glass of champagne she began to realise that physical fatigue and ex-

fanation had had something to do with the gloomy view she had taken of her sister's disappearance.

"Moira may be quite safe and have written to me. She might have given her letter to someone to post, who forgot it."

"Of course," said Frank, cheerfully, "very likely she met with some friend she had known in Wexshire, and they persuaded her to stay with them instead of going to Perkin's Hotel. Then you know Moira would have some difficulty in posting a letter, unless she went out alone. She couldn't let her friends know you had changed your name, and they would have suspected it if they had seen her posting a letter to Miss Martin."

"You make it all seem so hopeful," said Rosamond, with a little sigh. Then recovering herself, "And people do meet unexpectedly sometimes. Do you see that man over there?"

He followed the direction of her glance. At a table nearly opposite to them sat a tall foreign-looking man consuming coffee and buttered toast, while, at the same time, he perused an evening paper which he had carefully propped up against the sugar basin. He seemed utterly engrossed in his double occupation. Frank did not admire him. He had the insular prejudice against foreigners of that type, but he could not imagine what Rosamond's question meant.

"I see him," he answered, rather doubtfully; "but what in the world has he to do with Moira?"

"Nothing! I only quoted him to prove that you do meet people unexpectedly sometimes. One afternoon, a week or so before Moira left us, there was an entertainment in the Pier Pavilion. A professor of conjuring, mystery, and magic, was the chief performer, assisted by his niece. Moira and I were a good deal impressed by their cleverness at thought-reading, and I said to her as we walked home, I should like to meet them in private life—well, that is the man."

Dangerfield gave another glance at his *vis-à-vis*.

"How can you possibly be sure?"

"I am positive. I am very good at recalling faces; besides, when he spoke to the waiter just now I recognised his voice."

She was silent just a moment, then she said, wistfully,—

"Don't think me mad; but oh! I *should* like to ask Professor Masters about Moira!"

"My dear girl," cried Dangerfield, aghast; "what could he possibly tell you! Thought-readers are not fortune-tellers."

"He isn't only a thought-reader, he professed to tell people their future. Moira had hers told, and she seemed very much impressed by her. He couldn't possibly have forgotten her."

"Did you try the oracle, sweetheart?"

"No; and Rosamond blushed divinely. "I thought I knew all he could tell me."

"And what did he tell Moira?"

"That she would shortly leave home and be parted from every one she loved, and that she was very dear to someone she thought her foe."

"Meaning poor old Tempest. Bravo, Professor!"

"Don't jest," said Rosamond, "It seems cruel when we remember our uncertainty about Moira, but Mr. Dangerfield, isn't it strange?"

"Frank," he suggested, smiling.

"Frank, then. Isn't it strange that the Professor should have foretold just what has happened?"

In truth, Frank thought it very strange. "Devilish odd," was his private verdict, but he did not want to encourage his lady-love's superstition, so he only said gravely,—

"Dear, when you think that man probably predicts hundreds of things a week, it would be strange, indeed, if some of them did not prove correct. Pray did he tell you anything else, or did Moira's fortune end your interview?"

"He said one thing more; that Moira possessed a wonderful gift for his profession, and there was a grand future before her if she would give her attention seriously to such a career."

"I should like to have knocked him down!" was Dangerfield's comment. "It was like his impertinence."

"I don't think he meant any harm. You see his own niece was doing the same thing."

"His niece was quite a different thing."

"She was very pretty," said Rosamond, thoughtfully; "and, strange to say, she was rather like Moira. She was small and dark, and she had the very same Irish eyes. . . . I should like to speak to him."

Frank Dangerfield was very much in love, or the chances are he would not have yielded. He had not an atom of faith in Professor Masters. His sound common-sense revolted from taking council with a charlatan, and yet such was the intensity of Rosamond's entreaty that he presently crossed to the opposite table (which the Professor was just leaving) and said that the young lady with him had just recognised Mr. Masters, and much desired to speak to him.

The Professor returned with Frank to the latter's table as naturally as though such a summons were quite familiar to him.

"Ah!" and he smiled, showing all his white teeth, "the lady from the little place by the sea. What can I do for you, mademoiselle? Is it that your sister has changed her mind and would like to follow our so noble profession? Ah, but she would soon make both fame and fortune!"

Dangerfield interposed; he could not have explained why, but it gave him a horrible sensation of repulsion to see this man's dark eyes fixed on Rosamond.

"Unfortunately, sir, the young lady has disappeared; she came to London about ten days ago, and nothing has been heard of her since. Her sister knowing your (he paused to choose his words) varied gifts, thought it might be possible for you to help us to find her."

The Professor shook his head.

"Alas! no. Were she here before us, I could read the secrets of her heart, but my power is useless in her absence. . . . One thing I can tell mademoiselle for her consolation, her sister reached London in safety."

"How can you possibly know?" asked Dangerfield, in an incredulous tone.

"Because it so happen she stayed at the very house where I did find myself. I was asked to dinner by a friend who lives at a boarding-house; the meal was served at little tables like this," and he waved his hand to indicate the one at which they were seated. "I was at one end of the room, mademoiselle at the other; she did not notice me, but I—I never forget a face—knew her at once."

Rosamond started.

"You know where the house is; you will give us the address?"

"Willingly; but it will not help you."

"Why not?" demanded Dangerfield, savagely.

"Because I saw the young lady once again; it was the next day, Thursday. I was going into the country with my niece to give our entertainment. I noticed mademoiselle; she was taking her ticket just in front of me, and when I got into the train I saw her leaning out of a carriage window lower down."

"And where did she take her ticket for?" demanded Rosamond, breathlessly.

"Southampton. . . . I went myself to Bournemouth, but I had what we call a 'frost,' the entertainment did not 'take' there, and I only stayed two nights."

Rosamond looked at the Professor in dismayed perplexity.

"You would not deceive me. You are quite sure it was Moira?"

"It was your sister. . . . Ask any of the officials at Waterloo, if you doubt me. Very few ladies went by that train; the one just before it was an express, and most people prefer to travel quickly. Then mademoiselle had a face not easily forgotten. I should say someone must remember her."

"But you will give us the address of the London boarding-house?"

He wrote it down in full on one of his own visiting cards; then, with a slight inclination of his head, he departed.

The two he had left looked at each other for a moment in silence, then Frank glanced at his watch.

"It is twenty minutes past five, there would

not be time to go to Shirley House and catch your train at Liverpool street. What shall we do? I will you let me telegraph to your mother that you are detained! I am sure I could find you some nice lodgings, and—"

But Rosamond interrupted him.

"You don't understand Mumsy, she would be frantic. No, whatever happens I must get back to-night; but oh, it is maddening not to be able to follow up the clue."

"I will follow it up, dear," said Frank with a self-sacrifice she could not appreciate justly, since she had no idea how much he had looked forward to the journey to Netherton with her, "you will trust me to do my best, won't you; and to-morrow I will come down and tell you the result."

She thanked him simply, but there was a look of gratitude in her eyes which well repaid him. They had still ten minutes before they need start, and he said tentatively,—

"I suppose you will not release me from my promise, and let me take Charles Tempest into our confidence?"

"Oh, no; a thousand times no. Why, Frank, it would be like begging of him to do something for us. Besides, he hates the Hursts, and believes all sorts of evil of them. Let him go on thinking of us as Martina. Then he at least tolerates us."

Frank hesitated.

"You shall have your way, my darling, only Tempest has one of the clearest heads I ever met, and he admired (that's a mild word for it) your sister so much, that he would throw himself heart and soul into the quest."

But Rosamond stood firm.

"I could never look him in the face again if he knew the truth," and, of course, after that Frank ceased to urge her.

They reached Liverpool-street ten minutes before the train started. Frank left his sweetheart alone for a few seconds. When he returned he had a first-class ticket to Netherton in his hand. He had his suspicions that Rosamond had come up third and did not intend her to return so, as, being the height of the Netherton season, the last train on a Saturday would undoubtedly be very crowded.

"Oh, Frank," whispered the girl as he turned to open the door of a carriage, "isn't it dreadful to think that I am going home no wiser than I came. What shall I say to mother?"

"Put a good face on it, dear, and don't let her suspect how anxious you are. I'll be down to-morrow. I've no notion how the trains go, but I'll catch the earliest possible. Be brave, sweetheart, and keep up your courage for my sake."

But when the train had fairly started, and Rosamond was out of sight, as Frank walked briskly off the platform, in spite of himself, a nameless depression seized on him. Moira's disappearance was so strange and mysterious that try as he would he could not feel hopeful of finding her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of good family, and sufficient, if not unlimited income, it had rarely happened to Frank Dangerfield to meet with positive rudeness from his inferiors, but his interview with Mrs. Oliver began so very unpleasantly that he really felt thankful Rosamond was not present to be troubled by the woman's insolence.

He had asked for the proprietress of Shirley House, feeling he was more likely to get information from her than a servant.

Mrs. Oliver received him, all smiles and graciousness till he mentioned his errand, when her manner changed as though by magic.

"Tell you about Miss Hurst, indeed; I can tell you one or two plain truths about her. She came here an utter stranger, whom I took in without references, through my foolish good nature, and she decamped the next day without a word of warning, or even paying for her accommodation. The less I hear about her the better. I'm not used to such disgraceful goings on."

"I shall be only too glad to discharge all her

habilities," said Frank, gravely, "if you will tell me the sum due to you for a week's board, and what is customary in lieu of notice, I will thankfully pay it. The friends of Miss Hurst are in the gravest possible anxiety about her, and would be thankful for any information in your power. It never occurred to them that anyone could put an evil interpretation on her disappearance."

Mrs. Oliver melted a little.

"I should be sorry if anything had happened to her, I never thought of that."

Frank took out his purse and handed Mrs. Oliver a five-pound note.

"Kindly recoup yourself for any expense or annoyance you may have had."

She was an honest woman and she would not take a penny beyond the thirty shillings agreed on for the week's board, saying, frankly, she had already left the room.

"I had Miss Hurst's portmanteau-packed up, perhaps you would like to take it with you?"

He assented, and again asked if she could give him no clue to the missing girl.

"No; I hardly spoke to her myself, but there is a lady here who made great friends with her the only evening she was with us. I will ask her to see you if you like. She has been very indignant with me because I did not make more stir about the matter. But there you see I quite believed Miss Hurst had 'made off' of her own free will, so I never supposed harm could happen to her."

In Helen Talboys Frank felt he had a sympathetic listener. Mrs. Oliver left them together, and he gave her a brief outline of the quiet home at Netherpton, and the anguish there if Moira could not be found.

"I have been very angry with Mrs. Oliver," confessed Helen, "for her apathy. I told her she ought to have put the matter in the hands of the police, but she was so afraid of notoriety injuring her business that she would not listen to me. From the first I suspected foul play."

"But why?" asked Frank, horrified at having his own fears put into words.

"Miss Hurst was so pretty and attractive I took a great fancy to her; she told me she was seeking a holiday engagement as governess or companion, as for family reasons she wanted to be away from home till October. She inquired particularly the hours of meals; the waitress who saw her in the hall as she went out declares that Miss Hurst specially said she would be in to lunch at half-past one. Now, Mr. Dangerfield, it is clear she meant to return, and the only idea I can come to is that she was forcibly prevented."

Frank Dangerfield shuddered.

"I knew," went on Miss Talboys, "that she meant to go to a free library near here to look at advertisements. I had the curiosity to go round myself, and, describing her to the attendant, ask if any one like that had been to the reading-room on Thursday morning."

"Well," said Frank, with breathless anxiety, "and did they remember her?"

"Perfectly, and—prepare to be surprised, I have not mentioned this to Mrs. Oliver or any living creature. The attendant said the young lady was there hardly half an hour, and that having occasion to go into the reading room a little later she picked up a purse immediately in front of the chair on which Miss Hurst had been sitting. The attendant, of course, took charge of the missing property, which, by the rules of the place, she is bound to keep intact for three months if not sooner claimed. I am an *habitué* of the library, and well known to her, so as a favour she allowed me to look at the purse. It was of Russian leather, and had the initial 'M' on it in raised silver. It contained about three pounds in gold, a little silver, and half a sheet of paper on which were copied down three advertisements for holiday governesses."

"This is terrible," gasped Frank; it means that the poor girl was actually penniless when she disappeared."

Helen Talboys nodded.

"In such a plight would she not naturally have inquired at the library to see if she had dropped the purse there?"

"Yes, but—"

Helen interrupted him.

"Or, if she was a free agent, would she not have come back here? From what she told me she had not a friend in London. What could she do friendless in the London streets? At Shirley House she would have had all her meals quite free of expense, and no one would have expected her to pay a penny until the week for which she engaged her room expired."

"She had a home, a mother and a sister. If she despaired of finding her purse, surely her first impulse would have been to write to them. In the little box on her dressing-table were paper, ink, envelopes and stamps. I tell you, Mr. Dangerfield, I have thought over Miss Hurst's disappearance till I feel almost dazed, and I can only come to one opinion, that she was spirited away by some evil power (I don't mean ghostly influence but some enemy's hand), and has been kept away ever since."

"I am engaged to her sister," said Frank, sadly. "My fiancée came to London to-day to try and find her. She went home just now almost heart-broken."

"Poor girl!" said Helen, kindly; "but ten days seem a long time. Have they only just taken alarm at her silence?"

"It seems she wrote the night she arrived in town, and Rosamond has been expecting a second letter ever since. It was only when she had written three times without reply that she came up to London."

"And you have no clue at all. Miss Hurst was pretty and accomplished. She told me she had been in London several times. Is it possible that she had no acquaintances here who would have received her. I don't want you to adopt my gloomy view."

Frank shook his head.

"In that case would she not have come here for her luggage?"

"Then turn to the other side," said Helen, "for argument's sake adopt my theory that she is being kept away. Had she any enemies?"

"I never heard of any. There is a lady living near the Hursts who is very much afraid one of the girls may marry her son, but that hardly amounts to being their enemy."

"Hardly."

"And—I hardly like to mention it lest you should laugh—a professor of conjuring and thought-reading, whom the girls saw performing some weeks ago, told Rosamond to-day that he had seen Moira twice since she came to London—once dining here, and once at Waterloo Station."

"All kinds of people dine here without staying in the house. He may have done so."

"He gave us this address. I thought if I failed to come on any clue here, I would go on to Waterloo Station."

"When did he see her there?"

"On Thursday afternoon (the day she disappeared) between two and three. He declares she took a ticket to Southampton."

"But the money," suggested Helen. "Remember, she was penniless."

"And why should she go to Southampton? No, I confess I rather scorned the Professor's theory before, and now I have seen you and heard of the loss of her purse, it seems to me utterly impossible."

"But you must not leave a stone unturned, so it would be better to go to Waterloo. Would you like me to accompany you? It sounds an odd proposal; but little things strike a woman which might not occur to a man, and I took a remarkable fancy to Miss Hurst."

"I shall be very grateful to you," said Frank, who had begun to feel that there were difficulties in his search for a young lady who was neither his wife, sister, fiancée, or cousin. The companionship of this shrewd sensible woman of the world would be of the greatest help to him.

Miss Talboys did not keep him waiting long. She swallowed a glass of wine and a biscuit (the expedition would cost her her dinner), and rejoined him in less than five minutes.

"We can get an omnibus all the way to Wellington Street," she said, economically.

But Frank preferred a cab. He told Miss Talboys the omnibus would probably be full, and that time was of great moment to him.

It was a strange experience for Helen to be driving across London in a hansom with a man she had never set eyes on before, but she had no prudish scruples, and was glad to be of any help in the search for the girl who had made so great an impression on her.

They hardly spoke during the drive; but as they entered the station, she said to him kindly, "pray don't despair, Mr. Dangerfield. Remember we are doing our utmost."

Frank was as white as a sheet.

"Do you know I dread finding the officials and asking them questions. Don't you see that if the clue fails here, I shall be utterly at a loss, and in a huge station like this, how can I expect the man to remember who travelled by a particular train more than a week ago?"

"Courage," said Helen. "I fancy one particular man sees the same train off day after day. Our first thing to do is to find him."

A silver key is of no small service in such a quest; by dint of it two porters were discovered who were on duty when the slow afternoon train left for Southampton and Bournemouth.

They listened attentively while Frank described Moira minutely, and asked if they remembered any such young lady travelling alone to Southampton on Thursday in the preceding week.

"Small and dark, with black hair and eyes rather prettier than most folks," said the elder man, drily. "I remember her, sir. She came half an hour before it was time to start, and seemed mighty anxious because someone she had to meet wasn't here; but he came soon after."

"Was it the Professor?" crossed Frank's mind, and straightway he gave a full and particular description of the conjurer.

But both porters grinned.

"You're out there, sir," said the younger.

"He wasn't a day older than twenty-five, and he was about as fair as a man could be. I know I thought they looked a handsome couple, one so dark and tiny, the other so fair and big. They had wonderfully little luggage, just one Gladstone between 'em. They took it in the carriage with 'em, and the girl tipped me a shilling for carrying it. But for their coming to the station separate, I should have guessed they were starting on the honeymoon."

"She wasn't dressed like a bride," put in the older porter; "her clothes was good, but none of 'em were new."

"What did she wear?" demanded Miss Talboys, pouncing down on the younger official as most likely to have noticed this important matter.

"Well, ma'am, I'm not much of a hand at that sort of thing. She'd a coat and a skirt of blue stuff, serge I expect. It wasn't unlike my Sunday suit, and a white shirt with a red tie, and the noblest white sailor hat; but for all she was got up so like a man, she was a pretty little lady."

Frank asked a few more questions; but Miss Talboys seemed to have lost all interest in the subject, she even strolled off to a little distance, and seemed busy reading the advertisements of some wonderful new soap, while Frank rewarded and dismissed the men. He felt a little hurt at her desertion, but before he could speak on rejoicing her she turned to him with a strange light in her eyes.

"That woman wasn't Miss Hurst."

"Good gracious!" and Dangerfield started. "What on earth makes you so positive?"

"Well, to begin with, Miss Hurst was in mourning. I put down on a piece of paper exactly what she wore when she left Shirley House, and you will see that not an item corresponds with the porter's description. She had on a costume of fancy black alpaca, a shady black lace hat with white roses, and a long black lace scarf."

Dangerfield stared at her.

"You must be a wonderful woman, Miss Talboys. I should never have thought of that."

"No," she answered, simply, "a man wouldn't, that's why I offered to come with you. If the porter had only said generally she was dressed in dark colours, I should not have noticed the discrepancy; but you see her attire had evidently made an impression on him. And he really described it very well. Now, we know Miss

Hurst had no money, and even admitting she had a lover, and allowed him to present her with a hat and gloves, she was not the sort of girl to accept a complete outfit from a man."

Dangerfield groaned.

"You are convinced?" asked his quick-witted companion. "You think I am right?"

"I am sure of it—but don't you see this destroys my last clue. What am I to do now. I can't go back to Netherpton to-morrow and tell my little girl her sister is lost in London."

Helen Talboys looked really concerned.

"Is your *glancé* clever? I don't mean at book-learning; but is she quick at seeing things?"

"Very quick."

"The sort of girl you can treat as a rational being? Not one who would go into hysterics if you told her anything disagreeable?"

"She is 'real grit' as the Americans say. I have seen her when a man was brought home to their house insensible and looking like death, and her presence of mind never failed her."

"Then you can trust her," said Helen simply. "Tell her that you are convinced the girl who went to Southampton is not her sister, and that you believe the latter is hidden away by some enemy."

"That's rather startling."

"Don't you see the sister will know the poor girl's secrets better than you can do. She will be able to tell you if there is anyone (a discarded lover for instance) who bears any grudge against Moira or would be likely to try and get her into his power."

"I feel positive there is no one," he answered; "in fact, I know that a friend of my own is passionately in love with the girl, and will be in sore distress when he learns of her loss."

But Miss Talboys kept her own opinion.

"I am sure that the only way to find Miss Hurst is to work backwards. She could not disappear like this unless of her own free will or by the evil scheming of an enemy. From all you say she is the last sort of girl in the world to inflict such agonizing suspense on her family of her own accord; therefore I maintain that she is a prisoner."

They shook hands and parted; Frank Dangerfield had a kinder opinion of strong-minded women all his life from that meeting with Helen Talboys; but he could not all at once adopt her views as his own.

He went to Netherpton by the first train on Sunday morning, arriving soon after the church bells had ceased. He made his way straight to Adelaide House, knowing that Charles Tempest would be glad of his company, even if the ladies were at church; but it came on him as a great relief to see Rosamond reclining in a hammock chair on the verandah.

"Mumsey has gone to church," she said, "and Mr. Tempest is lying down with a bad headache, so we have more than an hour to talk over things in. Frank, I am at my wit's end; your friend kept sending messages to me last night, and I had to say I was too tired to move. He has sent twice this morning, but happily I was not up."

"What does he want?"

"What we all want—news of Moira. Oh! Frank, I know you have no good tidings for me; I saw it in your face. Now, tell me everything, before we are disturbed."

And he did just as she commanded; he did not keep back one fragment of Miss Talboys' very gloomy views, but he assured Rosamond he did not share them; he still believed firmly that some happier explanation would be found of Moira's strange disappearance; and he begged her to keep up her courage and hope for the best.

"She is right in one thing," said Rosamond, alluding to Helen Talboys; "Moira would never have accepted a dress and such like things from any man; besides, Frank, she knows no one answering to that description. Of course, when we lived at the Priory, we had a good many visitors, but not one of them corresponds to the porter's sketch; and, Frank, pretty and graceful as she was, Moira had no lovers. I was always with her; she had no secrets from me, and I am

positive that when she came here she was perfectly heartwhole and fancy free."

"But you have been here some time."

"And whom has she seen except yourself, your friend, Mr. Tempest, and Dr. Stuart. You know that Mr. Tempest has never left Netherpton. Dr. Stuart is short and dark, you are not 'tall and fair.' I am not suspicious, and I trust my sister. If Moira loved anyone well enough to give up everything else for his dear sake, I should try and believe he was worthy of her; but, Frank, how can I believe she has eloped with this 'tall fair man,' when I know that she had no acquaintance with anyone resembling him."

"You bring me to my last thought. Can Miss Talboys be right? Had your sister an enemy?"

"No. . . . But—" here Rosamond trembled. "You know that man from whose persecution you saved me?"

"Jim Dalkeith! Surely he does not know Moira!"

"I don't think he has ever forgiven me; and I have a strange dread of him. I know that it was he who made Mrs. Tempest believe that Moira and I were adventuresses. Since that his engagement to Miss Tempest has been forcibly broken off by her brother, don't you think, as a sort of revenge, he might be ready to do Moira a mischief?"

"Yes, if he suspected all she was to poor old Charles! . . . When was the engagement broken off?"

"Last Friday."

"Then your theory won't stand. Jim Dalkeith must have been here at the time of Moira's disappearance."

Rosamond looked so white and harassed Frank longed to say something to cheer her, but, alas! he could think of nothing. Look at the matter as he would, he felt the gravest anxiety for her sister's fate.

They sat, hand in hand, in the little rustic arbour, feeling as though this terrible uncertainty had drawn them very close together, and their engagement had been a thing of weeks instead of hours.

Rosamond never forgot that morning spent with her lover in the sweet summer sunshine, but it was certainly a shock to Mrs. Martin on her return from church to find her daughter with a young man's arm round her waist, while her head rested trustingly on his shoulder.

But Frank Dangerfield was equal to the occasion.

"Rosamond has promised some day to be my wife!" he said, proudly, "and I want you to accept me as a son-in-law. I will take the best care of her that heart and strength can, if only you will trust her to me."

(To be continued.)

It is proposed to supply London with sea water for bathing by pumping the water from the Channel, near Brighton, and conveying it to a great reservoir on Epsom Downs, from which it would flow downhill to London.

It is announced that a German scientist has patented a process by which a tissue is made that will take the place of the natural skin and be absorbed as the injury heals. He takes the muscular portion of the intestines of animals. Both the inner and outer layers of membrane are removed. The middle portion is then permitted to remain for a suitable time in a solution of pepsin, when the fibres are found to be semi-digested. The substance is then treated with gallic acid and tannin. Large surfaces from which the skin has been removed by disease or accident may be healed in a short time by means of this tissue. It is prepared and laid upon the raw surface, which has previously been sterilized, and is very lightly bandaged in place. The union of the tissue and the surface takes place in a little while, and the tissue forms a coating that answers the purpose of the skin to a degree better than any known substance, and is likely, when still further perfected, entirely to remove the necessity of skin grafting.

PAYING THE PENALTY.

—30—

CHAPTER XXXIX.

As Rachel had surmised, Paul turned down the path toward the road that led to the city. She had not waited to don cloak or hat. Silently as a shadow she followed after him. It was her right to know what was going on. A wife had a right to know that which concerned her so vitally. The night was chilly, and Paul had taken the precaution to don his top-coat.

She wondered if he was going away, and whether he had taken all his clothes with him. In that case she should never see him again, she thought.

It occurred to her that she had seen a servant take a bag only that afternoon. It must have belonged to Paul. That was before he had come to her with his request.

Again Paul distanced her.

Once again Rachel turned the bend in the road. Yes; the two figures which she had dreaded to see were there—Paul—her Paul—and Daphne.

As she watched them eagerly another person joined them. She knew that it must be the lawyer, Mark Graham, because of his portly form. He had driven up in a carriage; the three entered it, and a moment later they were bowling rapidly down the road in the direction in which the vehicle had come.

"He is gone!" cried Rachel, raising her hands to Heaven. "Gone! I shall never see him again."

She fell upon her knees as she said the words, and the wildest cry that ever fell from human lips came from hers.

"What is the matter, Rachel—Mrs. Verrell? I find you here a second time, and you are weeping violently. What is the matter? Please tell me, won't you?"

Looking up, half crazed, through her tears, she saw Philip Walton bending over her.

In the delirium of her agony she scarcely realized what she was saying.

"Go away and leave me to die!" she moaned, wildly. "I cannot endure it any longer; the end has come at last!"

"Will you tell me what is the matter, Rachel?" he asked again very gently.

"My—my husband—has fled with—another woman!" she gasped, wringing her hands.

"Surely it is not as bad as that," he cried.

"It could not be worse," she moaned.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Yes," she sobbed. "I followed them here, and I saw them go away together."

"My poor girl," he murmured. "Oh, Rachel, in this your hour of need, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Show me how I can die and end it all. It would be the greatest kindness you could do for me."

"No, no; you must not die," he cried.

"There are others who love you so well, that they would end their lives too, if you should die."

"I cannot live and face it. The whole world will know it by to-morrow."

All in a moment he forgot prudence; he only remembered how well he loved the girl kneeling there in the wild abandon of her woe.

"Do not remain here a moment longer to face the world's scorn," he cried, hoarsely. "Fly with me, Rachel, and everyone will know, though one man has deserted you, that there is still another whose heart beats with love for you. You are too weak and fragile to face the comments of the people. Come with me and escape it all. No matter what the world says, let me shield you from it; let me love you and care for you, and nurture your wounded spirit back to life, love and strength, I pray you. I cannot see you in such sorrow as this. My heart aches for you, my only thought is to comfort you. Come with me, and you will, never, never regret it. Rachel, how can you go back to your friends and answer their questions, and listen to their words of sympathy? It will surely kill you, Rachel."

"I know it will," she sobbed.
"Come with me," he whispered, softly, raising her gently from her knees "and escape it all. Come back to the house, and pack up a few things that are necessary for you to take. I will order the fastest team in the stable to be harnessed, and will wait for you wherever you may say. Let the world not see that you are an abandoned, despised wife. Oh, anything but that!"

Was it any wonder, dear reader, with her heart distorted with such anguish, that the poor, misguided girl should listen?

"You are right. I cannot face it," she moaned, "and live."

She sprang to her feet, her eyes glaring wildly, her hands outstretched.

"No, I could not bear the comments of the people. I will go. Take me away from here—anywhere, anywhere! It will not matter much what becomes of me, now that my husband has left me."

He took her unresisting hand in his and led her in silence back to the house. The merry laughter in the house floated out to her. Like a thief in the night she stole through the corridors of what should have been her own happy home.

No one saw her enter. She walked along as those walk in some terrible dream from which they would give their souls almost to awaken. She took one glance about the rooms that she was never again to see. She had made out the cheque for Paul for the full amount his uncle had willed her. He did not look at it when she gave it to him, but surely he must have seen it ere this, and he would know that she had given him all. She had signed away the last shilling to him, and now she was penniless in the great wide world. She took from her white hands and still whiter throat the jewels that had adorned them, and laid them in a heap in the little casket where her maid would find them. She would never don them again. Let him take those with the rest. She removed the silk dress and dainty kid slippers. In an adjoining apartment her maid's wardrobe stood open. Only a few days before she had placed therein a long dark cloak and a thick travelling suit.

She would need them more than the maid would. She arrayed herself hastily and stood before the mirror.

Was this wild-eyed, white-faced creature the fair, dainty Rachel whose beauty was the theme of every lip?

She was going out into the darkness and bitterness of death; but there was no one to care; none of those who had feasted or made merry with her would grieve over her woe, or give her one thought on the morrow, when her pitiful story became known. She remembered but a short time ago she had been talking to a party of merry young girls, and one of them asked at length,—

"Did you know that Mrs. So-and-So's husband had left her?"

"Can it be possible?" was the answer. "Well, I am not very much surprised. I thought it would have happened long ago. She was very disagreeable, quiet and unsympathetic, even morose in her manner, while he was babbling over with brightness and joyousness. He needed a gayer wife. They were not suited for each other. Why, do you know, the ceremony was scarcely over ere he discovered that alarming fact. They grew apart from each other more and more each day. No one will be at all surprised that he has left her."

Rachel had turned away, with a bitter pain at her heart.

How harsh the world was to a wife, if sorrow once overtook her, and how lenient to a husband, no matter what he had done. It seemed to be the unanimous opinion of everyone present that it was all the wife's fault.

The same people who had discussed that other wife's great sorrow would speak as lightly of her own. No, no; she could not face all this and live—it would drive her mad! It did not matter much what became of her; the world never seems to care what becomes of a wronged, deserted wife. Her head seemed to whirl; it quite seemed to Rachel that she was fast losing her reason.

She heard strange sounds of laughter wherever she went. The room appeared peopled with a wondering crowd, who were all pointing their fingers at her, as they whispered one to the other,—

"She must be a horrible creature, for her husband has left her! Her husband has left her! Her husband has left her!"

Rachel fled from the room in the wildest of terror.

The very pictures on the walls seemed to laugh at her mockingly as she hurried past them; even they seemed to know it. She fled hurriedly past them, like one dazed, like a fugitive hounded down to death; their voices seemed to follow her and taunt her.

She opened the door that led out into the grounds. The moon shed a soft, white, silvery light over the fragrant earth. Every leaf and blade of grass sparkled with jewels of dew; but she did not see them.

She did not even see the man pacing so hurriedly up and down under the trees, nor the prancing steeds that were hitched to the post down the gravelled walk.

"Ah! you are here at last, Rachel!" he cried.

"I—I was almost afraid you had changed your mind."

She looked at him in dazed bewilderment.

"Where is your bag?" he whispered.

"Bag?" she murmured—"what bag?"

He drew back and looked at her with a startled frown.

He knew the truth in an instant. She had suffered so much that her reason was tottering.

Philip Walton saw that she did not even recognize him nor grasp the meaning of his hurriedly-uttered words.

He took her hand and led her along as if she were a tired little child. He raised her in his strong arms and placed her in the vehicle.

Unhitching the horses, he sprang to the seat beside her, cracked the whip over the mettlesome animals, and in a moment of time home and friends were left far behind, and Rachel, whose soul was as white and pure as a snow-drop, was launched on the road to the darkest future that ever a hapless girl could know.

CHAPTER XL

WHEN Paul Verrell entered the carriage with Mr. Graham and Daphne he said to himself it was the happiest moment of his life. He was going to gain freedom—and Rachel, whom he loved better than life.

The carriage bowled rapidly along. Paul radiant with his own thoughts; and after a lapse of time that seemed to the impatient young man an age, it drew up before the lawyer's office, where they all alighted.

They entered, and a few moments later Mark Graham drew up the all-important papers which he read carefully aloud, then passed to Paul.

"It is all right, my friend," he said, a glad sigh of relief escaping from his lips. "Have it signed at once."

Daphne heard it read aloud too, and she listened calmly, with compressed lips, and a strange glitter in her restless eyes.

When the lawyer had finished they held a short consultation, after which Daphne was asked to sign a paper, thus agreeing not to put in a defence to Mr. Verrell's petition for divorce.

With an ill grace she seated herself at the desk and signed the necessary papers; then the £12,000 (for which she had sold her soul) was counted out to her, and Paul Verrell bowed himself coldly out of her presence and entered the lawyer's private room.

When he found himself alone, and realized that he had the necessary papers now for his freedom, he could scarcely refrain from uttering a loud joyful refrain.

"It almost seems too good news to be true," he thought.

A moment later, and Daphne, unnoticed, unattended, made her way out of the office and went slowly down the steps.

As she reached the street she held up the

crip notes exultantly, saying excitedly under her breath,—

"Ha! you think you have beaten me, Paul Verrell; but he laughs best who laughs last. If you but knew it, I have won this money from you by a cunning scheme which I concocted some time ago. You little know, Paul Verrell, that I was married long before I met you. But I managed to keep it a secret from you. I needed this money and you paid it to me for not putting in a defence. Ha! ha! ha! how I fooled both you and the would-be sharp lawyer into thinking I had the right, when in fact I was not your wife at all."

Daphne gave directions to the impatient cabman to drive her to one of the finest hotels in town.

As they bowled along over the roughly-paved streets, she muttered to herself,—

"I will feast myself in sumptuous style, with high wines and costly viands, this night. I want to feel as grand as a queen on a throne. I must leave this part of the country in a short time, and commence life again in some place where I am unknown. What will that girl Rachel say when she finds out I am an imposter, and not even her sister, but simply a pretty scheming nurse, as she is sure to learn some day? My—my husband is on my track now. I shall do well if I can escape him long enough to look round London and rig myself out in some fine silks and jewels which I intend to buy the very first day I can get out. If I succeed in making a fine appearance and in getting myself up so well that people will call me unusually handsome, as they have in the past, who knows but that I may find another love-sick young millionaire, who will lay his heart and fortune at my feet—if—if—my husband does not find me out! Ah! it's the truest saying in the world, 'All's well that ends well.'"

And while Daphne, the heartless beauty, was spending her time in riotous, wild revelry that night, Paul Verrell passed the long, tedious hours, until grey morning broke, in quite a different way.

He had accepted the lawyer's kind invitation to go home with him that night; but instead of seeking his couch for the rest he so greatly needed he paced up and down his solitary chamber until the morning broke; then he waited very impatiently for Mr. Graham's well-known step in the corridor.

He came at last, and they descended to the breakfast-room together, Paul partaking of only a slight repast in his eagerness to commence the transactions of the day.

If Rachel was but sitting opposite him in his own home, his loved, his cherished wife, as he had pictured her a thousand times, he would have been the happiest man the world held, he told himself.

An hour later, the lawyer, accompanied by Paul Verrell, repaired to the court-house.

It was an exciting hour for Paul, the case was heard behind closed doors, and a little later given to the jury.

Without leaving their seats the jury rendered a verdict in favour of Paul Verrell, and he stepped out of the court-room a free man, the happiest person the sun shone on.

Paul could hardly wait until he reached home, his happiness was so great. How the birds sang in the blue heavens! How golden was the sunshine, as he rode along!

He laughed aloud as he said to himself this should be his wedding-day. He stopped at a little church on his way.

The old clergyman, whom he had met on several occasions, was pruning his roses in an adjacent garden.

He came quickly forward, as he recognized the visitor, who drew rein at the gate.

"Good-morning to you, my dear sir," said Paul, raising his hat. "Isn't it a beautiful day?"

"It is indeed," responded the clergyman. "Heaven and earth seem smiling at each other."

"Will you be at leisure this afternoon, sir?"

"I believe I have no duties to require my attention," responded the clergyman.

"Will you consider your services engaged by me for an hour or so?" he asked.

"Certainly. You may consider my time entirely at your disposal, Mr. Verrell."

"You will be highly amused when you hear what I wish," said Paul, blushing to the very roots of his curling brown hair.

As the clergyman did not answer, waiting for him to go on, he added, hesitatingly,—

"I have consented to a very absurd thing to please my wife. Now do not smile when you hear it. You see, this is the wedding anniversary of several of my wife's relatives—her mother's and her aunt's, and I do not know whose else. She has taken the notion to have our own marriage ceremony performed over again upon this day, so she can have the same date that the rest of them have for celebrating."

"It is indeed an odd notion," agreed the clergyman. "I never knew but one case where the ceremony was performed over at the request of the lady, and that was where a certain little matter came up which she greatly feared would invalidate her marriage. The husband at once agreed with her that they had better be on the safe side. It turned out that this was the wisest move that could have been done, as they both found out afterward."

Paul laughed, as though the story amused him, but the clergyman saw that he turned strangely white.

"Perhaps I ought not to have mentioned the matter to him," thought the reverend gentleman. "It seemed to me that it impressed him very strangely."

But it was not to be wondered at. The very thought of anything of the kind must be very annoying to a gentleman as high-minded as Mr. Verrell. He had promised himself to make one or two calls on his parishioners, but owing to Mr. Verrell's request, he made up his mind that he would remain at home.

The long afternoon wore away. He had donned his best suit, and was waiting in the best room for them; but Mr. Verrell and his wife did not put in an appearance.

He said to himself,—

"My remark must certainly have changed their plans."

Dusk crept up, and the darkness of night settled over the earth. Suddenly he heard a violent peal at the bell, as of one in great agitation.

The old gentleman went to the door himself.

To his great surprise, Paul Verrell staggered into the room, his face white as death. His hair was dishevelled, his eyes wild in their expression. At the first glance the reverend gentleman drew back aghast, thinking him under the influence of wine.

"Bless us!" he cried, in fearful amazement. "Paul—Mr. Verrell, what is the matter? Something has happened!"

He stood before him, tall, slender, swaying in his passionate dignity and despair, his face white, his eyes dark with sorrow.

"Reverend sir, what am I to do?" he said, in a voice hollow, sepulchral, like nothing human. "My wife—Rachel—has left me—gone from my house, out of my life, for ever!"

"Gone?" he repeated, scarcely believing that he had heard aright. "Had there been any coolness—had you vexed her?"

"No—never!" he answered, in a hoarse voice. "I loved her too well for that! I loved her so well that I would sooner have plunged a dagger in my heart than have quarrelled with her."

A calm seemed to come over the old clergyman for a moment as he heard this; then a troubled, terrible foreboding—a chill, stern presentiment of coming evil, that, man as he was, robbed him of his strength, and clutched at his heart with an iron hand.

He heard a sob at that instant from Paul, which he tried to choke back; he saw him clench his strong hand, while he cried out,—

"In Heaven's name, tell me what to do! I—I cannot bear this sorrow! Life for her was too dull here. She was like a child—yearned for her childhood's home and friends!"

"I always thought so much of her," said the old clergyman. "I know there is something you

have not found out about it. Perhaps she has made a little flying visit to her aunt's, and will return in a day or so. The poor young thing was simply thoughtless."

"Come home with me, sir," said Paul, with a great effort. "This is the most unfortunate day of my life!"

CHAPTER XLI.

It seemed to Paul, as they drew near his deserted home, that there was the stillness of death about the place.

He looked in vain for Rachel's face, that had always greeted him whenever he came within sight of the house. The porch, too, was empty; none of his guests could be seen.

"Where are they all?" he wondered.

What a strange morning and sad day this had been to him.

Paul said only a few words to the pastor, and they were,—

"How I long to behold her! I am only afraid of one thing," he said, trembling with visible excitement, "and that is, when I see the one who has been counselling her, and who has stopped beneath our roof, that I will do him harm. I would not have told you this," he said, hoarsely, "but you would have heard it."

The reverend gentleman fell back, as if thunderstruck. Of all possible evils this had never dawned upon his mind.

Paul's face lost its marble pallor. A flame as of fire seemed to have passed over it at that instant.

"I must tell you the worst quickly," he added, painfully. "My wife—Rachel—has not gone alone!"

The clergyman was literally speechless. The only thing he quite clearly understood was his friend Paul's agony and distress, which were pitiful to behold.

He asked no questions when he entered the beautiful home that Paul had provided for her; everything looked in the most perfect order, as usual; nothing had been altered—no trace had been left of anything wrong.

Brown came forward as he saw his master, who drew near him, and a terrible fear came over the unhappy husband.

It was by the face of that faithful servant that he first became aware of his wife's desertion.

All nature had seemed bright and smiling to him when he reached his home only a short hour before.

That pretty country home, with its woodland and meadows, loomed up bright and smiling in the sunshine.

With a quick, bounding step, Paul had sped up the gravelled walk, thinking how happy he would make Rachel during the remainder of his life.

He was so anxious to claim her as his wife, now that he was free! She should have, if she desired, a fine home in the city, where there were more life and gaiety.

If she wanted him to build a beautiful home, and expressed a wish for her aunt Marion and uncle Andrew to live with them, he would grant her wish without delay.

If she wanted to go on the Continent and live there, he would do it.

He would do anything and everything she wished or desired—ay, devote his whole life to her.

He spoke a few careless words to his old servant, Brown, who stood looking at him with a strange expression on his face that he did not quite understand.

"My lady," he said, "wished you to go to her apartments as soon as you returned."

"Is she sick, or has anything happened her?" he cried.

A terrible fear of oppressing evil and dread began to creep over Paul. He dreaded to hear Brown's answer; but he could not tell why.

"No; but I fear something is wrong," he said, slowly.

"I don't understand you," Paul answered, excitedly. "Has trouble or illness befallen her

in my absence? You must speak man, and tell me quickly."

"It is not my place to give an opinion, sir," said Brown, "but I think that both illness and trouble have weighed down her mind. I had no fear of anything wrong," he went on, "until I was passing along through the corridor, putting out the lights, as is my custom. The guests had all gone to their rooms, and I had seen my lady come in through a side-door with a terribly white, excited face, a half hour before. She did not go near the company, but simply rushed up to her room with a wild, sad light in her eyes, as if she did not want to see anyone in the world. By-and-by she came down and walked with swift, unsteady steps right past me, not seeming to know me, her eyes growing more haunted and wild-like, murmuring half aloud words I could not understand. She darted out of the house, through the shrubbery, and down the dark lane."

"Great heavens!—my poor wife—something was the matter with her! Why did—did you not follow her?"

"I did follow her at a distance as well as I could, Mr. Verrell," he replied, shortly, "but it was of no use my trying to overtake her, she ran so swiftly."

"There's a well there. How do you know but that she fell into it?" he gasped.

"I did fear that at first, sir; but another fellow, Fred, who works about the place said he saw her go down the road a few minutes later, and he watched her until she was lost in the distance."

"Gone—and alone!" he said hoarsely. "I cannot realize it."

"Oh, Mr. Verrell," Brown had answered, solemnly, "can you bear a greater sorrow and not break down?"

He looked at the man vaguely.

"You are killing me by inches," he said. "What is it?"

"Mr. Walton has gone away too—he left about the same time."

Paul Verrell had started back, his senses clouded, his brain in a whirl, as though the words had stabbed him.

Like one in a horrible dream he groped his way to Rachel's room, knocked, and as no response came, he staggered into the darkened apartment, and fell into the first chair.

He trembled like one in a fit of ague as his eye fell upon the wild disorder about him. He went to her desk, thinking he might perhaps find some note or ever so slight a clue that she had left behind her for him; but there was not even so much as a scrap of paper, only her jewels and each and every little gift, from the smallest trinket to the costliest gem.

He turned away without uttering one word; his white lips never moved; no murmur escaped him.

He could scarcely keep himself from falling to the floor, as a brave man falls when he receives a death-wound.

"I shall go mad," he said to himself, hoarsely. "I shall go away from here before the people beneath this roof find this out. I know not whether it would be prudent for me to search for her, and punish the deep-dyed villain who has brought all this weight of sorrow to my door."

He tried to console himself with a prayer, but his soul seemed filled with curses instead.

At last his wild raving became a little subdued, and his burning brain began to think, to reason out what he had better do.

He drew the blinds, and shut out the bright sunshine, locked the door, of her room after him, and went back again over the same path he had come.

But now it seemed to Paul that every step he was taking but led him into the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

With a long, lingering look at the dear spot he had called home, he turned and left it. He took with him a changed, haggard face that made men and children look pityingly at him as they passed him.

The clergyman saw that Paul was growing more wild each moment; his face flushed hotly, his lips burned like fire; his eyes became bloodshot. He

was almost afraid of him, and yet in this, the darkest hour of his trouble, he could not think of leaving him.

Again and again came the words from his lips—

"Heaven, what have I done that I should suffer thus! My name, my love, my reason are blighted—she has crushed them! I gave her my life and she has destroyed it. There is nothing more for me to live for now—nothing to do but to die and end it all. Oh, my wife, my love, lost to me for ever."

He was deathly white; his lips trembled as the two men crossed the threshold. It seemed to him that great bright flashes of lightning passed before his eyes.

There were the trees, but their foliage seemed drooping.

There were the windows from which she had watched every day for him; but no fair face was there now.

The doors of the pretty parlours were open, but there was no one in them. With a great effort he went to his room, and throwing himself in his favourite arm-chair he buried his face in his hands and sat there for hours.

All this time the patient clergyman tried to comfort him; but his efforts were useless.

"I shall have to leave this place as soon as I am better," he said. "Will you see the guests for me?"

The vicar understood this suggestion, and acted upon it. He sent for the visitors to meet him in the library.

It would be very awkward to send them away, he knew; but circumstances alter cases, and he would use all the diplomacy in his power in discussing the matter.

He waited till Paul's wild raving ceased, and saw his eyes droop.

"He will sleep now," he thought, "and sleep will save him."

The vicar went down into the room where the guests were all assembled, and sat down among them with a grave face which frightened the ladies for an instant.

"I came to tell you that Mr. Paul Verrell, who has enjoyed your company so much, is quite ill in this house, and regrets very deeply that he cannot be among you for a long time. I am quite sure I would like to bring you some other message that would be pleasanter by far for you to hear, ladies and gentlemen, but under the circumstances I am obliged to give you this sad message. It will be many weeks before he will be well, and as it would be most unpleasant for you to go about the place with hushed voices and muffled tread it will be the means of breaking up what has been a very pleasant party, and causing early departures to be regretted."

When he had finished they all expressed their deep sorrow, and with messages of kindest regards and sympathy they shook hands with him, and decided to return to their respective homes on the morrow.

CHAPTER XLII.

As soon as he could possibly leave them the old clergyman went back again to Paul's room. He crossed the threshold noiselessly. Mr. Verrell was not in the arm-chair where he had left him but a little while ago—he had thrown himself down on the sofa and buried his face in his hands.

He bent over him, and listened to his irregular breathing and to the deep groans that seemed to rend his very soul. Then he turned away with a shrug of his shoulders, as he thought how strong, how good, how honest, was this young man before him, and yet he was overcome—bowed down by his grief like a little child.

Darkness had grown on apace. There were no sounds in the house now; all was quiet, and a deathlike stillness reigned.

A strange, ominous silence, like a heavy cloud, seemed to hang over him. He could stand the depression no longer.

Crawling to where Paul was, he bent down and touched him, trying to arouse him.

"Merciful heavens! What was there in that

touch which sent a shock like an electric thrill through his being! he wondered.

"He is cold—his sleep is such a strange one," he murmured. "It seems as if he were stricken dead!"

The clergyman fell on his knees and placed his ear over his heart. It was beating, but so faintly he could barely hear it. His hands were clammy and limp, while great drops of cold perspiration stood out on his temples.

"This stupor that has come over him is dangerous," he cried out, in alarm. "Something must be done for him, and quickly at that. I must not lose another instant to revive him."

He called in Brown, and with his assistance they undressed and placed him in bed. Then a messenger was sent away in hot haste for the nearest doctor. The old servant repaired to the kitchen and heated a boiler of water, with which they bathed him. But even this was unable to arouse him from the stupor into which he had fallen.

The physician promptly responded to the call. A moment after he entered the sick-chamber he made a careful examination of his patient.

A grave, perplexed look crossed his features as he motioned the clergyman to his side.

"It is well you sent for me when you did," he said in a low voice that was unmistakably solemn. "Another half hour and it would have been too late for me to have been of any service to him."

"What do you find serious about his case, doctor?" the clergyman asked, hastily.

"I can explain only one symptom that is alarming to me just now, and to which I am obliged to turn my attention instantly, and that is, that the patient is suffering from poison. I will do my best to save him, as I fear he is quite low!"

"Great Heaven! Can it be possible?" said the reverend gentleman, aghast. "He must have taken it when I was down-stairs. He was labouring under such sorrow, he probably tried to end it!"

He stood by the doctor, trying all he could to assist him, while he bent every effort to counteract the deadly drug that Paul Verrell had recklessly taken a short time before.

Tears dimmed the old man's eyes as he bent over the white, rigid form, and gazed into Paul's glazed eyes, with the one thought uppermost in his mind—

"Will he live or die?" "The issue lies in the hands of Heaven," the doctor had said gravely. "This is one of the most serious cases I have ever been called to attend. I will do my best to save him. While there is life there is hope, remember. I cannot tell the turn it may take."

The old minister uttered a silent prayer as the physician with skill and tenderness faithfully fought the grim destroyer for his life.

(To be continued.)

HORACE LANGFORD'S TREACHERY.

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(Continued from page 416.)

CHAPTER VII.

A REAL wintry day, with a cold, bitter wind blowing from the north-east, which gives to faces that red and blue appearance which is not the most becoming. And on this particular first of February noses seemed redder, and cheeks bluer than was usual, whilst the snow came down not in feathery clouds, like down from a goose's back, but in a cruel cutting way, more like a rain of ice.

"How do you like it?" asked one omnibus driver of another, as holding the reins in one hand he beat the other against his breast to restore the dormant circulation, whilst in was with difficulty he could keep his horses from falling on the slippery ground.

"Send the coals up, I'm a thinking," was the logical reply. "Double fares to-night, Jim, I'll bet; and has for that blooming City, it's only

fit for flies who can 'old to glass;" and "Bank, Chesapeake, Bank!" he cried, between each sally, as, stamping his feet on the footboard, he solicited passengers until the limited time for stopping had expired.

And when Gertrude Hazlewood arose on that particular morning she thought, too, how cruel the snow looked, with the dark, leaden sky lowering overhead; the bitter wind finding its way even into that bright, warm room, causing the beauty to shiver, as she sat before the large coal fire.

It was past ten o'clock, and her maid was laying out the bridal costume, in which her mistress was so shortly to be robed.

Vieing with the snow without in its rich purity, was the robe of satin, with Honiton lace within, which was so soon to adorn the most beautiful woman in London; and as the French maid laid out each article ready for use, she became rapturous in her praise of their beauties.

"Oh! mademoiselle, c'est magnifique!" she exclaimed. "Oh! you well look one beautiful princess; and de diamonds are splendid," and she held up the diamond necklace which was destined to adorn her mistress's lovely neck.

But, greatly to her disappointment, Gertrude seemed not to heed her ecstasies of delight; she never turned as she enhanced the beauty of each gem.

To Annette it seemed impossible for a woman to be callous to the possession of what she considered was all that was required to make life happy, and she was at a loss to understand how her lady could sit so quiet and still; when, had she had her own way, the effect of each would have been tried hours ago.

And as the moments passed into minutes, and minutes into hours, and still no movement on the part of her mistress, Annette could bear it no longer.

She sneezed, she coughed, she stirred the fire, removed anything and everything that she thought must draw attention, until in her excitement she knocked over a small table, and a crash had at last the desired effect.

"What on earth have you done, Annette?" said Gertrude, as she turned with a start to where her maid was endeavouring to repair the mischief.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the girl, as a real expression of horror passed over her face. "De table did tomble! It is broken—it is broken! What a misfortune!"

"What is broken?" asked Gertrude.

"Why, de glass, mademoiselle—your little glass vot you hold to see de back! Oh! mon Dieu—mon Dieu!" and she burst into tears.

"Whatever are you crying for?" said Gertrude.

"It does not matter; I can have another."

"It does not dat, ma chère mademoiselle!" Annette sobbed, "but it is es de aign that is so bad!"

Mrs. Hazlewood, followed by the Misses Orbury in their bridesmaids' attire, entered the room as Annette was lamenting her misfortune.

"What is the matter?" the former exclaimed. "Annette in tears, and you, Gertrude, not commenced dressing! The carriages will be here in less than twenty minutes!" and Mrs. Hazlewood approached the scene of the disaster, whilst the girls whispered to each other that it was a bad omen.

But it was soon forgotten, as, with the assistance of her maid—who, in the excitement of dressing the bride, had recovered her composure—Gertrude soon appeared in her wedding dress, her lovely complexion rivaling in its whiteness the ivory satin and lace in which she was arrayed.

Gertrude never felt so sad as at this moment—her pride, for the first time, being swallowed up in the great love she felt for D'Grey. And now, when she was so soon to cross the gulf which would separate him from her for ever, her proud spirit chafed at the chains which should bind her to another; and in this, the severest trial she had ever known, she almost hated the man who was so soon to call her wife.

But she would not let others see the agony of mind she was enduring. A false smile played over her features, and the blush which overspread her cheeks only served to enhance her beauty, as

robed in her bridal attire, she descended the stairs to the carriage that was awaiting her.

It was cold—bitterly cold; and the cruel snow came down in icy streaks on the windows, as if furious it could not reach the beauty within.

There were many assembled, notwithstanding, to see the bride enter the church; and as she alighted on the pavement a general murmur of admiration passed through the crowd. She was accompanied by her mother and Captain D'Orsay, who was to give her away—the bridesmaids having preceded her in another carriage.

Horace had already arrived, and the church was nearly full with friends and strangers, who had come to witness the ceremony, when Gertrude and her retinue advanced to the altar, and the service commenced.

The clergyman, who was assisted by his curate, was an elderly man; his face was close shaven, but his snowy hair was thin, and fell scantily over the band of his surplice, almost as white as the robe he wore.

The last tone of the organ had died away, and as Horace and his bride stood by the altar a pin might have been heard to drop in the holy edifice, as he asked, in a clear voice,—“If there were any just cause or impediment why this man and woman should not be joined together in holy matrimony?”

He waited for a moment, and then was about to proceed with the service when a tall man, whose grey hairs betokened the marks of time, rose from his seat and approached the altar, saying,—

“I forbid that this marriage should take place!”

Horace turned to whence the voice proceeded, and as his eyes fell on the man who now advanced, “Ralph Barton!” he cried. But the latter took no notice, as in reply to the clergyman's question, why the ceremony should not proceed, he replied that the bridegroom was a married man.

“The false!” cried Horace, appealing to Gertrude, who, now pale and awe-stricken, seemed about to faint. “Don't believe him!” he said. “This man comes forward at this time thinking to avenge a petty wrong I did him years ago.”

“If you need corroboration of my words,” said Ralph, “it is here.” And, returning to the seat from which he had risen, he led forward a pale, trembling girl, who leant upon his arm for support, as, with the assistance of a crutch, she advanced up the aisle.

“Josephine!” exclaimed Mrs. Hazlewood.

Gertrude had fully recovered her self-possession as her eyes took in the whole situation; and, with a scornful glance at Horace, she bade her mother lead her from the church.

“One moment!” said Langford, as the proud beauty descended the altar steps. “That girl is not my wife! But this is no fitting place for explanation. Grant me an interview at Eaton-square, and I swear I can clear myself from that man's vile accusation; and if with no better result, at least you will not find me to be the villain he has depicted me!”

Captain D'Orsay now stepped forward, and as he bid Gertrude to allow him to see her to her carriage, he informed Horace that Mrs. Hazlewood would see him that afternoon, at the same time requesting that Mr. Barton, with Josephine, would present themselves at Lady Orbury's at the same time.

And still the blinding snow came down, down, down, and Gertrude blessed it for the shelter it gave her from the staring crowd, as she re-entered her carriage; her proud spirit suffered much under the feeling of degradation and wrong this man had caused her. How could she bear it! she asked herself. So tenacious of ridicule, she to be the byword of the clubs, the gossip of the servants' hall! Oh! it was terrible, terrible; and the tears started to her eyes, not for any feeling of regret that she did not return from that church a bride; but she was wounded in her sorest point, her pride; and so D'Orsay felt as he looked on her, like a drooping lily on its stem. Never had he loved her as at that moment, and

his great big heart bled, as it went out to her, in her deep sorrow.

Annette was in fits to ascertain the cause of her mistress's sudden return.

“And not a bride!” she questioned Lady Orbury's maid; but that young person was as totally ignorant as herself; so she had to be content, waiting for the course of events to enlighten her on the subject.

And so on that February afternoon Lady Orbury, her daughters, and guests, with Captain D'Orsay, were assembled in the drawing-room at Eaton-square, awaiting Horace's arrival.

Gertrude was cold and subdued, but no trace of emotion was visible on her face; and it was only herself who knew how her heart thumped, thumped, under her silken bodice as Mr. Langford's name was announced.

He coldly returned the colder recognition of his presence, and Lady Orbury bidding him be seated, Mrs. Hazlewood was the first to break the cruel silence.

“Mr. Langford,” she said, “notwithstanding that you must renounce all claim to my daughter's hand, still I am anxious to do you justice; and if you can clear your name and conduct from the stigma which has been placed upon them both myself and daughter will only too gladly recognise your right to do so.”

Horace bowed; then rising, and proudly drawing himself up to his full height, with his arms crossed before him, he stood as a prisoner at the bar to plead his defence.

“Mrs. Hazlewood,” he said, “I am not guilty in point of law. I never asked your daughter's hand as a married man. Some years ago, I met Ethel Bliss, who calls herself Josephine—she, with her mother, living at Myrtle Villa.”

“Myrtle Villa!” exclaimed Gertrude, interrupting him; “and was found dead there,” as she remembered Mrs. Charlton's story.

“Yes,” he continued; “we became attached to each other, and doubtless at that time I should have made her my wife; but the fact of our intimacy coming to my father's ears, he was furious, and declared, in the event of my carrying out my intention, he would disinherit me. I had no prospects in life, but through him, having been reared with large expectations. I had no profession, no trade on which I could fall back, and indeed was too indolent to exert my abilities, so as to be independent of his wealth. The result was a stormy interview, in which I left my father's roof, only to return when he called me back, and accede to his wishes.”

Ralph Barton was now announced, with Ethel leaning on his arm, and Lady Orbury bid them be seated, whilst Horace concluded his narrative.

For a moment the face of the latter blanched as his eyes met Ethel's; but his worst nature now prevailed, as he felt he could refute that of which she had no proof, he continued,—

“Ethel Bliss,” without looking at the pale girl so near him, “was by her mother's command about to marry an old man, old enough to be her father; and the idea was so repugnant to her that the day previous to her intended marriage she threw herself into my arms and begged of me to take her away.”

He waited a moment to see the effects of his words, and continued,—

“I was but twenty-three, she a beautiful girl of eighteen; and being too weak to resist the temptation, for I loved her then, I brought her to London, and, unknown to my father, made her a home at Maida Vale.”

“As your wife, Horace Langford,” said Ralph, now rising.

“Never!” cried the former, livid with rage.

“Indeed, it is true,” said Ethel, bringing a crumpled paper from her bosom. “Oh, madame, mademoiselle, look, read,” she said, excitedly, as she spread before them the certificate of her marriage. “I am indeed his wife.”

Horace, too astonished to speak, now stood as a lion at bay, as Ralph Barton addressed him.

“Yes, Horace Langford,” he said; “I was as you know, the old man from whom you stole his pet lamb; but the bird whose song would have been my life, and who nestled its head in

your bosom, and of whom you so soon wearied, and left to beat its wings against its cage, had never tarnished those wings.

“The night she left with you she was your lawful wife. You thought the blow you gave me had proved fatal; but I was only stunned, and on recovering my senses I followed to the church, where, unseen, I became a witness of the ceremony.

“Shortly afterwards I made myself known to Joe Binks, the only one, as you thought, in your secret. ‘The dog that fetches will carry.’ He was a villain, like his master, and the same means that you took to prevent his denouncing you as my murderer I used to make him keep up the deception, and inform me of your movements. It was he who brought me the marriage certificate which he told you he had stolen from the girl whose fair fame you would have blackened when she stood in your way.”

“Oh! spare him, mademoiselle, spare him, Ralph,” cried Ethel, as, throwing herself on her knees at Gertrude's feet, she raised her hands in entreaty. “He was not to blame. How could he think of me, when you were so beautiful? I was so simple,” she continued, “a poor little half French girl. I loved you, mademoiselle, and had you let me I would have told you all, and if I ever pained you forgive me—forgive—”

She would have said him, but she dared not.

“Josephine,” said Gertrude, assisting the girl to rise. “You must not kneel to me! I have nothing to forgive.”

And Horace still stood with folded arms watching the scene before him, expecting each moment to be ordered from the house.

Even Ralph, the man to whom he had done the greatest wrong, pitied him, as there he stood among his accusers, found guilty by all.

And Gertrude, the beauty to whose pride he had dealt so heavy a blow, even across her mind came the remembrance of times when she almost loved him; and she felt that a feeling of scorn for his perfidy, but not revenge, was all now that she had left.

“Mr. Langford,” she said at last, “there is but one reparation that you can make for the injury you have done this girl—for the insults you have showered on me. Give me your promise that the events of this day, with its painful disclosures, shall not be repeated without these walls. Promise at least to make the only reparation you can for the fearful degradation you have brought on me, by keeping the same a secret from the outer world.”

He advanced to where Gertrude sat by her mother's side, and with bowed head avowed his crime, while thanking her for her clemency.

She arose as he approached.

“One thing more promise, Mr. Langford,” she said, and taking the hand of Ethel, she placed it within his own. “Take her,” she said, “and be good to her, for she loves you fondly, truly still.”

But he stood as one in a dream, unable to realise his position. He, whom he thought to have been ignominiously expelled from her presence, thus to be dealt with was incomprehensible to his hollow nature.

The revulsion of feeling was so great that a sudden faintness came over him, and had it not been for Ralph's strong arms, who, accompanied by Ethel, led him from the room, he would have fallen to the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was the end of August again, just ten years later than the date on which our tale opened. London was quickly becoming empty, that time having arrived when, it is said, a cannon ball might be fired down Regent-street without fatal results.

The city was stuffy, dusty, and stifling, and those who were obliged still to remain at their desks looked like flowers lacking water; they were longing for a peep at green fields and waving corn, or for one sigh from the sad sea waves, as they still sat on those high stools, and wrote,

wrote, with their hands sticking from heat to the paper.

It was two long flights of stone stairs which led to the offices of Grant & Co., auctioneers and estate agents, Gracechurch Street, and it was unusually hot this morning, when an old gentleman, after several times resting to wipe the perspiration from his face, ascended the same.

In answer to the clerk who asked his business, he said he called respecting an advertisement in that morning's paper of the sale of an estate near Hertford.

The young man, requesting him to be seated, vanished into the adjoining room, where he was in a few seconds asked to enter.

Mr. Grant rose as the door was closed by the clerk behind him; he had not been sitting on a high stool as the young man were in the first office, but in a comfortable, round chair, with semi round back, into which he returned after asking the gentleman to be seated, and then entered at once on the object of his visit.

"It is a magnificent place," said Mr. Grant, alluding to the property in question; "with over eighty acres of arable land. It is surrounded by pleasure grounds, kitchen garden in the rear," &c.; and he was proceeding to enumerate all what did belong, and many advantages that did not belong to the same, when his visitor stopped him, saying,—

"It is needless to trouble you to mention the surroundings of 'the Dells,'" he said, "as I know it so well, that I am willing to become a purchaser, if you will simply name the price, although I never should have thought it would have been in the market."

"No!" replied Mr. Grant, as he took up a pen, tried it on his thumb-nail, then passed it under the same nail, to remove an imaginary speck of dirt, "and it never should have been. Mr. Langford, to whom it belonged, had an only son, who like only sons invariably do, incurred his father's displeasure—a woman in the case of course—and the old gentleman swore he should never bring her to live in the place."

"Hem," ejaculated the stranger.

"So," continued Mr. Grant, "he left by 'will' that the money realised by the sale of the estate was to be divided amongst the different charities named."

"And a very charitable arrangement on his part, certainly," said the visitor; "feathering every bed but the one on which his own flesh and blood should lie. However, it is to be sold, and I may as well purchase it as any one else, so to business."

And for some time they sat arranging terms with regard to the sale of the "Dells," and as the old gentleman descended those two long flights of stairs,—

"Yes," he soliloquised, "the place shall be his, which by birthright it is, and all I ask in return is for them to let old Ralph Barton pass the remainder of his days where the sound of children's voices (her children) shall be as sweet music to his ears, where their tiny faces shall be as sunshine to his withered heart."

And so it was. But a few months elapsed before Ethel and the husband she had ever loved and long forgiven, with their three little ones, were living at the "Dells;" whilst grandpapa Ralph, as the latter would insist on calling him, had long forgotten past wrongs, and felt happy in the happiness of her whom he loved so fondly to the end.

Myrtle Villa is again "to let," Mrs. Hazlewood selling off everything on the marriage of her daughter to Captain D'Orsay, who having left the army, succeeded to his wife's wish to purchase a lovely place on the banks of the Rhine, which home her mother was to share with them.

And Gertrude, if ever she referred to the past, would tell her husband that had she not been made to suffer what she did, she would never have known the happiness she now enjoyed. She freely forgave the man who had so crushed her proud spirit; whilst he, Horace, thanked Heaven that, ere it was too late, he had been brought to know how fondly he really loved the wife whom he had so cruelly deceived. He was now an altered man, and if ever he would blame

himself in the past a fond kiss from Ethel would bid him let that past be buried in the grave of forgetfulness.

Joe Binks's lot had not fallen in pleasant places during the ten years since last we saw him, Horace would not exactly forsake the tool of his villainy; but the large resources on which that gentleman had formerly depended, when he was "ard up," were no longer available; and as he stopped at nothing which would enable him to replenish his exchequer, five years out of the ten Joe spent in prison, until in a burglary, in which he was discovered, he killed a policeman; he was afterwards tried and convicted, thus ending his miserable life on the scaffold.

[THE END.]

A PERFECT LOVE.

—10—

To love is to live in a world of the heart's own creation, whose forms and colours are as brilliant as they are deceptive and unreal. To those who love there is neither day nor night, summer nor winter, society nor solitude. They have but two eras in their delicious but visionary existence, and those are thus marked in the heart's calendar—**PRESENCE, ABSENCE.** These are the substitutes for all the distinctions of nature and society. The world to them contains but one individual, and that individual is to them the world. The air of his or her presence is the only air they can breathe; in the light of his or her presence is the only sun of their Creation, in which they bask and live.

To love is to live in an existence of perpetual contradiction; to feel that absence is insupportable, and yet be doomed to experience the presence of the object as equally so—to be full of ten thousand thoughts when he is absent, the confession of which we dream will render our next meeting delicious; yet, when the hour of meeting arrives, to feel ourselves, by a timidity alike oppressive and unaccountable, robbed of the power of expressing one—to be eloquent in his absence and dumb in his presence—to watch for the hour of his return as for the dawn of a new existence, yet when it arrives to feel all those powers suspended which we imagined it would restore to energy—to be the statue that meets the sun, but without the music his presence should draw from it—to watch for the light of his looks, as a traveller in the wilderness looks for the rising of the sun, and when it bursts on our awakened world, to sink fainting under its overwhelming and intolerable glory, and almost wish it were night again—to feel that our existence is so absorbed in his that we have lost all consciousness but of his presence; all sympathy but of his enjoyment; all sense of suffering but when he suffers—TO BE, only because HE IS, and to have no other use of being but to devote it to him; while our humiliation increases in proportion to our devotedness, and the lower we bow before our idol, the prostrations seem less worthy of being the expression of his devotion; till you are HIS when you are not yourself. All other sacrifices are inferior; and in it, therefore, all other sacrifices must be included.

A FIRM of typewriter manufacturers have just put the finishing touches upon the handsomest machine ever sent out of their establishment. It is to be presented, through the firm's Russian representative at Moscow, to the Czar of Russia. All the keys are made of ivory, and the Russian characters upon them are inlaid in blue enamel. The cost of the machine is nearly £100.

THE Russians in modern times, have had only two younger Czsars than Nicholas II. These were Peter II., who succeeded in 1717, at the age of twelve; and Alexander I., who succeeded in 1801, at the age of twenty-four. The three late Czsars, Nicholas I., Alexander II., and Alexander III., succeeded respectively at the ages of twenty-nine, thirty-seven, and thirty-six.

FACETIÆ.

CUSTOMER: "Have you 'Prometheus Bound'?" Clerk (in bookstore): "I never heard of Prometheus, sir; but all our books are bound."

GRIBBS: "I've lost my umbrella four times in the past two weeks." RIBBS: "H'm. An umbrella that you can find as often as that can't be very much good."

MOTHER (reprovingly to a little girl just ready to go for a walk): "Dolly, that hole was not in your glove this morning." DOLLY (promptly): "Where was it then, mamma?"

PROPRIETOR: "Where is the bookkeeper?" Office Boy: "He isn't in. His wife sent him word that the baby was asleep, and he's gone home to see what it looks like."

ADA: "Blanche says he proposed to her, but she told him she must have time to consider." IDA: "What does she want to consider?" ADA: "Her chances of getting someone else."

POETICUS: "Have you read Shakespeare's 'Love's Labour's Lost'?" CYNICUS: "No; but I've taken a girl to the theatre, and had her talk to the man next her all through the show."

NEPHEW (who takes his uncle from the country into a restaurant): "Look, uncle, I press this button and order supper!" UNCLE: "Well, what then?" NEPHEW: "Then you press that button and pay the bill."

"WHAT course should a lawyer pursue when called on to defend a man whom he knows to be guilty?" asked the examiner. The examined scratched his head a moment, and answered,—"Charge him double, of course."

"I AM very much obliged to you madam," said the tramp to the farmer's wife, after he had eaten a hearty meal. "The dinner was most excellent, and I shall take great pleasure in recommending this place to my friends."

WIDOW: "Do you know, Mr. Caller, that you remind me very much of my late husband?" MR. CALLER (looking at watch): "Why, it is late, isn't it? Excuse me. I really had no idea of the time."

"YOU'RE improving wonderfully as a dancer," said a young wife, at a ball. "Don't you remember how you used to tear my dresses?" "Y-e-s; I wasn't buying 'em then," replied her husband.

MERCHANT (on discovering a man in his cellar): "Who are you?" "The gas man. I have come to see by your meter how much gas you have used during the last month." "Good gracious! I was hoping you were only a burglar."

ATHLETE: "Did I—break—it, doctor?" Doctor: "I will be plain with you. The arm is broken, the collar-bone crushed, the skull is fractured—" Athlete: "No, no, no; The—did—I—break—the—" "What?" "Record?"

HIS grandmother was so ill that the report got about that she was dead. A sympathetic old gentleman met the child in the street. "And when is your grandmother to be buried, my dear?" he asked her. "Not till she's dead, sir."

A SPIRITUALIST ASKS: "Did you ever go into a dark room where you could see nothing and feel there was something there?" Yes, frequently, and the something as a rule unfortunately chanced to be a mahogany table or a chair, against which we knocked our shins.

THE Servant Girl (relating anecdotes about a former lodger): "He was a funny man, he was. Used to have soups made without meat in 'em. And you should 'a seen that man eat beans!" Towler: "Perhaps he was a vegetarian." "Very likely. I know he was a foreigner of some sort."

THE curious effect that may be produced by a very small transposition of words and ideas is illustrated by this slightly "mixed" instruction, recently given by an officer at drill to a company of men: "When I give the command, 'Halt!' you will bring the foot which is on the ground to the side of the one which is in the air, and remain motionless!"

MRS. YOUNGHUB: "George, some people say they can see figures in the flames. Can you?"
 Younghub (wearily): "Yes; 28s. a ton."

MOTHER: "Why, my dear, what's the matter? Something has happened at Mrs. De Music's party, I know. Tell me all about it, my child."
 Daughter: "Boo hoo! Mrs. De Music asked me to play, and—and when I told her I was out of practice she said she was 'so sorry,' and didn't ask me again, boo-hoo-hoo!"

FOND FATHER: "Young man, do I understand you to say you would risk your life for my daughter?" "Yes, sir." "Then go into the dining-room and lunch with her; the cook has been away to-day, and she has been trying her hand. I shall be back from a restaurant in an hour to hear you further, if you be able to have anything further to say."

LORD DARGAN, before departing for India, bethought him of an old historic ruin which stood on his estate. Summoning his steward, Dan Mulligan, he showed him with his stick where he wanted a protecting wall built round the ruin. On returning, the first thing he did was to look for his castle, but it was gone. Finding his steward, he asked him where the castle was. Dan said: "Sure, an' that ould thing!—why I pulled it down to build the wall wi'."

"MR. O'RAFFERTY," said the judge, "why did you strike Mr. Murphy?" "Because Murphy would not give me a civil answer to a civil question, yer Honour." "What was the civil question you asked him?" "I asked him, as polite as yes please, 'Murphy, ain't yer own brother the biggest thafe on Manhattan Island, excepting yourself and your uncle, who is absent at the penitentiary at Sing Sing?'" "And what rude answer did he give to such a very civil question?" "He said to me, 'Av course, prinst company excepted!'" so I said, 'Murphy, you're another, and struck him wid me fist."

A YOUNG doctor commencing practice had amongst his first patients an uncommonly unclean infant, brought to his office in the arms of a mother whose face showed the same abhorrence of soap. Looking down upon the child for a moment, he solemnly remarked: "It seems to be suffering from hydropathic-hydrophobia." "Oh, doctor, is it as bad as that?" cried the mother. "That's a big sickness for such a mite. Whatever shall I do for the child?" "Wash its face, madam—the disease will go off with the dirt." "Wash its face—wash its face, indeed!" exclaimed the matron, losing her temper. "What next, I'd like to know!" "Wash your own, madam—wash your own!"

A TEACHER in a National school who had been much annoyed by truancy has recently been stringent in enforcing the rule that her scholars, on their return to school after an absence, must bring her a note stating in full the cause of such absence, the note to be in the writing of a parent or guardian. The following is a note brought by one of her pupils after two weeks' absence: "Louisa was absent Monday, please excuse her. Louisa was absent Tuesday, she had a sore throat. Louisa was absent Wednesday, she had a sore throat. Louisa was absent Thursday, she had a sore throat. Louisa was absent Friday, she had a sore throat. Read this over again for the next week."

WHY SHE SUNK.—He had returned home with his wife from a brief vacation at the seaside, and he stood in front of the house giving a friend a graphic account of his pleasures. "Went in bathing every day," he exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Ah!" responded the friend. "Wife go in too?" "Oh, yes, every day." "Can she swim?" queried the friend, with some interest. "N-o-o, she can't," was the reply. "She tried to learn, but somehow she didn't get the hang of it. She said she couldn't get the right kick, and I let her think that was the reason, but the fact was"—and here he looked up at the house, and sunk his voice to a hoarse whisper—"she couldn't keep her mouth shut long enough to take four strokes before she'd have some silly remark to make, when ferwash—she'd swallow a whole wave, and go plump to the bottom."

SOCIETY.

IT is rumoured that a matrimonial project is on foot to unite Princess Feodora to her cousin Prince Alfred of Coburg.

THE Prince of Wales is to make Marlborough House his headquarters until his departure for the Riviera at the end of the month.

THE visit of the Queen to the Court of Berlin, which had been almost definitely fixed for next spring, and for which the German Emperor had already been making very extensive preparations, has now been postponed *sine die*.

THE Princess of Wales has with her usual sympathetic kindness promised to be patroness of a bazaar which is to be held during the coming season in aid of the fund for building a Free Home for the Dying at Clapham.

NEAR the bed of Prince Bismarck, in his room at Friedrichshagen, is a pair of scales, on which the ex-Chancellor weighs himself every morning. He keeps an account of the changes in his avoirdupois in a note-book attached to the machine. Recently he has weighed about fifteen stone.

THE Queen has eagerly anticipated the visit of the Empress Frederick, as the keenest sympathy, as well as the closest affection, has always existed between Her Majesty and her Imperial eldest daughter, of whom we like to think as Princess Royal of England.

IN Russia flowers constitute an important part of a State dinner, being changed with every course; in fact, the elegance of the entertainment depends upon the variety and profusion of the floral display. In many instances in the land of the Czar the dining-room is a bower of white blossoms and tropical plants, some of them having been brought hundreds of miles for the occasion.

IT is stated at the Court of Athens that the Duke and Duchess of Sparta will represent the King and Queen of the Hellenes at the wedding of Princess Maud and Prince Carl next summer. The Duke and Duchess are very partial to the English and our habits. The Queen recently conferred the Grand Cross of the Bath on the Duke.

THE Grand Duke Alexander Michaelowitch of Russia, brother-in-law of the Czar, the husband of the Grand Duchess Xenia, has just passed through the press a work under the title of "Injuries to Vessels and How to Repair them at Sea," assisted by the naval engineer, M. D. A. Goloff. His Imperial Highness was the chief naval aide-de-camp to the late Emperor Alexander III., whose nephew he was, and he has translated from English a well-known work on marine boilers.

THE Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the Duke and Duchess of York have received most pressing invitations from the Emperor Nicholas II. to be present at his Majesty's Coronation. The Imperial Decree has been issued, according to which the Coronation of the Emperor and Empress of Russia is to take place at Moscow in May. It is said that the Queen will be represented by the Prince of Wales. The great day is to be May 18th—the twenty-eighth birthday of the Czar. It is also said that permission will be given to the Colonel and a number of officers of the "Czar's Own" Royal Scots Greys to proceed to Moscow to attend the Coronation ceremony at the public expense.

THE Queen is, according to present arrangements, to visit Sheffield on Friday, May 22nd. Her Majesty is to leave Windsor by special train about two in the morning, and will travel direct to Sheffield, where several Royal carriages will be waiting at the central station. The Queen is to open the new Town Hall, and will receive an address from the Corporation, after which there is to be a drive through the principal streets. Her Majesty is to dine at The Farm, the residence of the Duke of Norfolk, and in the evening will go on to Scotland, travelling over the Midland Railway to Carlisle, and thence by the Caledonian, arriving at Balmoral on Saturday morning in time for luncheon.

STATISTICS.

THE theatres of London regularly employ over 12,000 people.

THE private estates of the Czar cover 1,00,000 square miles.

IN the United States twenty ounces of tea are used to each inhabitant.

IF a well could be dug to a depth of forty-six miles the air at the bottom would be as dense as quicksilver.

THE number of foreigners resident in London is about 95,000. Of these 27,000 are Germans, upwards of 26,000 are Russians, 10,000 are Frenchmen, and 7,000 are Americans.

GEMS.

SELF-LOVE is not so great a sin as self-forgetting.

HE who bath most of heart knows most of sorrow.

PERHAPS the highest moral height which a man can reach, and at the same time the most difficult of attainment, is the willingness to be nothing.

THE great thing in observation is not to be influenced by our preconceived notions, or what we want to be true, or by our fears, hopes or any personal element, and to see the thing just as it really is.

ONE cannot too soon forget his errors and misdemeanours. To dwell long upon them is to add to the offence. Not to grieve long for any action, but to go immediately and do freshly and otherwise, subtracts so much from the wrong.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COCONUT GEMS.—Two cups of sugar, one cup of butter, three cups of flour, four eggs, half a cup of milk, one cup of coconut, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, and half a teaspoonful of soda. Bake in gem tins.

LIMA BEAN SALAD.—Boil a pint of Lima beans in salted water, and when cool drain and put in the salad bowl, with two small, cold, boiled potatoes cut in dice, and a plain salad dressing and half a teaspoonful of minced herbs.

POTATO PUFFS.—Put two cups of cold mashed potatoes into a frying pan with the yolks of two eggs, three tablespoonfuls of cream, salt, pepper, and one tablespoonful of butter. Stir until well mixed. Take from fire, and add the whites beaten to a stiff froth. Put in gem-pans, and bake in quick oven until brown. These puffs are very tasty with pickled fish or any warmed-over meat.

THREE-SNAPS.—One cup of treacle, one cup of sugar, one-half cup of shortening; beat it to a foam. Add two tablespoonfuls of vinegar and beat thoroughly. Use no ginger or spice of any kind. Salt to taste. Dissolve two teaspoonfuls of soda in one-half cup of cold water, and add this to the mixture. Stir in flour until it is very stiff. Cut in squares after it is rolled very thin, and bake quickly.

SCALLOPS IN BATTER.—Drain one pint scallops and season with salt and pepper. Make a batter by beating the yolks of two eggs; add one-half cup milk, and one tablespoonful olive oil, one saltspoonful salt, and one cup flour; then add whites of two eggs beaten stiff. Drop the scallops into the batter and fry in hot fat. This batter is the same as that used for apple fritters and other fruit fritters, only for fruit a teaspoonful of sugar is added. If the scallops are very small the batter in which they are put may be dropped by the spoonful into the frying-pan.

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This series comprises 3 dolls, six inches high; 3 dresses and 3 hats to match. The dolls' names are Daisy Bell, Annie Laurie, and Kate O'Connor.



Series No. 2, DOLLS' FURNITURE.—

This series comprises 2 easy chairs, 4 small chairs, table, couch, sideboard and piano.



Series No. 3, PUNCH and JUDY SHOW.—

This series comprises the Show, the Scenery, Punch, Judy, Baby, Toby, Policeman, Clown, Bellman, Hangman, and Scaffold.



Series No. 4, VILLAGE FAIR.—

This series comprises Circus, Roundabouts, Wild Beast Show, Marionettes, Big Wheel, Shooting Gallery, &c.



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FULL INSTRUCTIONS given with each series.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE is said to be a scarcity of Cuban cedar for cigar-boxes since the outbreak of the revolution in that country.

A CURIOUS old law still prevails with regard to the pictures in the Louvre, Paris. No painting is permitted to adorn its walls until the artist shall have been dead ten years.

THE Mexicans eat salt with their oranges, both because they prefer the fruit so seasoned, and because it is considered to be more wholesome with salt.

A GERMAN Antarctic expedition has been decided upon, and 950,000 marks allotted to it. It will consist of two vessels, and will last three years.

A metal-worker's magazine says that platinum wires have been drawn so fine that two of them twisted together could be inserted in the hollow of a human hair.

SOME harps have been discovered in Egyptian tombs. It is said that the strings in several instances were intact, and gave forth distinct sounds after a silence of three thousand years.

ONE of the novelties of electric lighting is the sign lamp, in which at the flat and darkened end of an incandescent bulb the letter is formed by being cut in transparent shape in the darkened glass.

SOAP abroad is now made in the form of sheets, and sold to travellers who object to the use of hotel soaps or those used in public places. It is sold in one-hundred-sheet books, each sheet being about the size of an ordinary bank cheque.

A STONE blotting-pad is being introduced. It is made of a bibulous stone that is said to absorb ink more readily than any blotting-paper in use. It is forced by compressing the sediment deposited by certain hot springs, which, having been accumulating for ages, "is available in inexhaustible quantities." It is highly porous, and will, it is said, take up a surprising quantity of ink, requiring only occasionally scraping with a knife to keep it clean and ready for use.

It's all very well to talk of economy, but the difficulty is to get anything to economise. The little baby who puts his toes in his mouth is almost the only person who in these times manages to make both ends meet.

HOW FRANKLIN WAS CURED.—Somebody has brought out the following interesting reminiscence: When Benjamin Franklin was a lad he began to study philosophy, and soon became fond of applying technical names to common objects. One evening, when he had mentioned to his father that he had swallowed some acephalous molluscs, the old man was much alarmed, and suddenly seizing him, called loudly for help. Mrs. Franklin came with warm water, and the hired man rushed in with the garden pump. They forced half a gallon down Benjamin's throat, then held him by the heels over the edge of the porch, and shook him, while the old man said: "If we don't get them things out of Benny he will be pizened sure!" When they were out, and Benjamin explained that the articles referred to were oysters, his father fondled him for an hour with a trunk strap for scaring the family. Ever afterwards Franklin's language was marvelously simple and explicit.

As we know, fire must have been first made by means of friction, and amongst the Mexican codices there is a picture of a man making a fire by rotating a stick between his hands. The sketch is perfect, because it shows how the slab of wood has its holes worked first into it, for unless you knew the exact way of getting up that slab it would be troublesome to start a fire. You may make smoke readily, but if you are not up to the exact way, and tumble out your spark with the wood dust, the blaze escapes you. It is, however, in the gesture sign movement that some of the interpreters of Indian pantomime see a return to the old way of making a fire. When an Indian wants to make the fire sign he rubs together the palms of his hands. Now, that may or may not recall a man's remembrance of the rotating fire stick. It might be only an act which we all repeat when we warm our hands by a fire. That is the way the French artists of the "Fils Prodigue" explained warmth imparted by fire.

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"YOUR late husband, madame,"—began her lawyer. "Yes, I know he was always late o' nights, but now that he's dead, don't let us upbraid him," said his charitable widow.

PRISCILLA (an aunt, to Prudentia, a niece): "Good gracious me, my dear, how very awkward to be sure! If there isn't that young man again we keep meeting at all the theatres, who does stare at me so?"

A PREACHER being requested to perform the last sad office for a young woman at the point of death, pressed her to believe that flesh and blood could not enter the kingdom of heaven. "I am safe," said she, "I am nothing but skin and bone."

THERE is such a thing as having too many children if your memory is poor. The other night Spriggins counted his brood, but could only make up fourteen. "How is this!" he asked his wife; "I thought there were fifteen of them at the last census." "So there were," she answered; "but one of them died since then." "Indeed!" said Spriggins, meditatively; "why, it seems to me I heard of that at the time."

AN EMBARRASSING UNANIMITY.—A commandant of cavalry, a good soldier, but rather rough to his men, understood that there were many murmurings against him. The commandant is a man of quick action, so when next a grand manoeuvre was ordered, he addressed his soldiers as follows: "I hear that some of you have complaints against me; now if any of you have anything serious to say, I would be glad to have you ride out from the ranks that it may be explained." At this the whole corps moved forwards. The commandant looked a second, and then crying "Halt!" went on with the exercises without a word.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

RECOLAPUS.—Such recommendations are never given.
INQUIRER.—The *Orien* was wrecked on 15th June, 1889.

HOUSEWIFE.—Very little starch should be put in napkins.

W. B.—There is only one way; leave off the dangerous practice.

MIXED PICKLES.—The two terms have exactly the same meaning.

SYMPATHIZER.—Mrs. Maybrick was condemned on 21st July, 1889.

JOB.—The "lead" of pencils ordinarily used is made of graphite.

WORKED SISTER.—The exercise of more self control will help him.

X. Y. Z.—Chili is a Peruvian word, signifying "the land of snow."

ETIQUETTE.—Breakfast napkins are smaller size than dinner napkins.

AMATEUR.—Photographs were first produced in England in 1802.

PEARL.—Next to the diamond, the hardest precious stone is the ruby.

MERRY ENGLANDER.—The Duchess of Fife gets nothing from Government.

PAINTER.—Artists invariably use the finest copal varnish for their pictures.

DISTRACTED ONE.—The best and cheapest way is to employ an inquiry agent.

AN OLD READER.—Opinions are never given on legal documents of any sort whatever.

WEAKLING.—Exercise should not be continued after the effort has become at all painful.

WORKED READER.—Benzine rubbed on the edges of carpet is a sure preventive of moths.

IGNORAMUS.—The lines of latitude run north and south; those of longitude round the world.

NOVICE.—The machines are so much alike that one readily acquires perfect control of them.

MARK.—Rub it out with the fingers. If you do not know how, ask some gardener to show you.

ONE IN LOVE.—You can only judge by his attentions whether he reciprocates your attentions or not.

T. W.—The leaves of the oleander scattered near the haunts of mice will drive and keep them away.

JACK IN THE BOX.—We presume it is danced in accordance with the fancy of those participating in it.

MORALIST.—We do not understand you. What is there that is illustrious that is not attended by labour?

STUDENT.—The first book printed in the English language was a "History of Troy," printed in Europe in 1474.

PARTY DICK.—Canary seed principally; a little hemp, Indian corn boiled or raw, ripe fruit, groundsel or lettuce blade.

W. W.—Better not interfere with them, though scars made when removal has been attempted being still less lovely.

FRIVOLITY.—Going into dining-hall the gentleman has the lady on his right arm; going into the hall she is on his left.

A TWENTY YEARS' READER.—If you contracted the debt you alone are liable, and they cannot compel your son to pay.

ALOY.—We are not aware that it has now more than its face value, as the orate for the possession of the coinage has died down.

TILLER.—There is no public institution of the sort, but perhaps the clergyman of your parish might know of some suitable place.

BASHFULNESS.—The length of a call is governed by circumstances. Never stay so late as to make each call a bore to the lady visited.

JOHN STAUNTON'S WIFE.—We have no objection, as long as you acknowledge the source, and only make use of it in the way mentioned.

MARCUS.—It is considered good form to raise one's hat to lady acquaintances whenever they are met, quite as much so in public buildings as in the street.

M. D. G.—The quotation, "As ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing," is from the "Student's Tale," in Longfellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn."

CORA.—To have corn-beef jelly after it is cold, and not as dry as a chip, put it into boiling water when put on to cook, and do not take it out of the pot until it has become cold.

CAMIE BOOT.—Sir Colin Campbell's name was McLiver; he was born in Glasgow; he entered the army as an ensign, and took his mother's name, Campbell, when he did so.

AMINO TO KNOW.—The name of "bridegroom" was formerly given to the new-married man, because it was customary for him to wait at table on his bride and friends on his wedding-day.

K. B.—The painter who was called "the Raphael of cats" was Gottfried Mind, a Swiss, better known under the name of Bernier Friedli. He was born in Berne in 1768; died there November 7th, 1814.

RACHEL.—Very few young ladies, we presume, need to be told how to render themselves agreeable to their visitors of the other sex. If you enter and keep in society a while experience will soon teach you.

AN OLD SUBSCRIBER.—Warts are low lived things, and the best way to get rid of them is to shave their heads off with a sharp razor, then touch them every day with acetic acid, and they will break up and disappear.

MONO GYNIE.—We are sorry to say we cannot trace the book you mention, and should advise your ordering it through your bookseller, who may be able to obtain it. Many thanks for your kind expressions of opinion.

ADVENTURER.—You can inquire now at Government Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, S.W., regarding South Africa, and get latest reports from that district; we strongly advise you not to emigrate.

BUTTERFLY.—Musical accomplishments contribute a great deal toward the entertainment of company, but, in lieu of them, girls possessed of ordinary conversational powers should be able to make themselves agreeable and render any social gathering attractive.

A DEAR LITTLE MAID OF TWO.

I'll sing you a song to a nursery tune
 Of a dear little maid of two,
 Who has peachen cheeks and rosebud lips,
 And eyes of a soft sea blue;
 With charms of a gleeful innocence,
 That are ripe at the age of two.

She is not an angel, no, no, no!
 And Heaven be praised for that;
 She is fairly human from top to toe,
 With limbs that are daintily fat,
 And where she trots, be it high or low,
 There is wealth of surprising chat.

Somebody's heart is strong and brave,
 And somebody's love is true,
 By day, by night, they are amply tried
 By this little maid of two;
 But somebody's love would never tire,
 Had it ten times more to do.

What reward does somebody get,
 Dear dreamer with eyes of blue?
 A kiss, a smile, from the roguish pet,
 A tender caress or two.
 Why, each of these is a heaven of bliss,
 From a sweet little maid like you.

Come, happy maid, with the sea-bright eyes,
 And prattle about my knee,
 Then lay that soft, round cheek to mine,
 And laugh in innocent glee!
 That childish talk and downy touch
 Give joy and strength to me.

Then grow, my sweet, as well you may,
 And be like somebody, true,
 For high-born dames of noblest heart
 Have been as tiny as you—
 And in the maiden of twenty-one
 May we find the maid of two!

H. J.

NERVOUS.—Think less of yourself, and try to store your mind with information on all current topics. You will then be in less danger of embarrassment. Go much in society, and try to keep steady nerves when you go where there are ladies.

FORGET-ME-NOT.—Chestnut salad is made from the large Italian chestnuts. These are blanched and peeled and cooked until tender, in boiling water, slightly salted. They are then taken out and carefully dried, when they are sliced and tossed with a little mayonnaise and shired on lettuce hearts.

OLD READER.—There is no cure for corns or bunions, that is, no certain cure; the resort is best for the corns and easy boots for bunions; sometimes the insoled meal poultice gives relief and a dressing with vasoline covered with oiled silk under the stocking worn during the day helps to relieve the heat and pain.

INTERESTED.—It is an erroneous notion very prevalent that death-warrants are signed by Queen Victoria herself. When the judge passes sentence of death upon a prisoner, before leaving the room he writes on the calendar against the name of the doomed individual, "Let execution be done;" and the execution takes place on the day named, unless a respite is granted.

G. D.—Phrenology has no connection with the teeth, neither have mental conditions anything directly to do with the decay of the teeth. All mental states affect the physical, and, indirectly, all of the organs, faculties and functions of the system. Teeth decay because they are not supplied with the proper elements for their support and keeping up.

FAK.—Always add a pinch of salt to the whites when you begin to beat, and put it with them in a cake. "Flopp" eggs, lifting them up to get them light, remembering that what you are trying to do is to introduce air into them. Beat the whites stiff and dry before adding the powdered sugar for a meringue, and one cause of its falling will be guarded against.

WATER LILY.—One pound oatmeal, half pound suet, one onion, one teaspoonful salt, quarter teaspoonful pepper; roast the oatmeal, and let it get quite cold; chop up the suet finely, boil the onion, and chop it up too; mix everything together; have pudding skins on the proper length, the one end and fill them three-quarters full, tie the two ends together, prick with darning needle and boil half an hour.

DANDELION.—Put a breakfast cup of flour into a basin, and add a pinch of salt; boil one cup of milk or milk and water with a small bit of butter or dripping; pour it in among the flour, stirring all the time till you have a soft dough; take the dough out on a floured board, knead it a little, and roll into a round some the thickness you desire; rub with flour, cut in scones, and put on the griddle till slightly cooked.

IVAN.—Phylactery means any charm, spell, or amulet worn as a preservative from danger or disease. Also, the dogcollar, worn by devout persons on the forehead and left arm while at prayer. Among the primitive Christians it was a case in which were inclosed the relics of the dead. In Jewish antiquity it was a slip of parchment, on which were written certain passages of the Pentateuch.

INJURED.—There is nothing venial in preparing or helping to prepare the meals in the large household of which you are a member. There are times when even the wealthy are without servants, and if none of the daughters of a family so situated had the least knowledge of cookery who would prepare the meals for the table? Indeed, nowadays, it is an important part of a girl's education, no matter how affluent her parents may be, to learn how to cook.

CABBIE.—An excellent breakfast dish is made as follows: Remove the crust from a half pound loaf of bread; soak the bread in a little more than half a pint of milk; add two well beaten eggs, and season with pepper, salt and nutmeg. To this mixture add two pounds lean fresh pork chopped fine. Bake it two hours in a buttered dish, basting it occasionally with melted butter, or with hot milk with a little butter in it.

PHIL.—Tattoo marks are hard to remove. Some suggest the blistering of the skin, which will cause new skin to grow, and thus obliterate the marks. Others say that the marks have disappeared by the skin being first well rubbed with a salve of pure acetic acid and lard, then with a solution of potash, and finally with hydrochloric acid. But we cannot recommend either mode, having no personal knowledge of the success achieved in any instance. The marks are said by many to be indelible, if produced by the insertion of some carbonaceous matter.

C. H.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer makes one general statement every year to the House of Commons which is intended to present a comprehensive view of the financial condition of the country. Sometimes there are preliminary or supplemental or occasional speeches; but the great general statement of the year has for a long time past been quaintly called "the Budget," from the French *budget*. The annual speech known by that appellation embraces a review of the income and expenditure of the last year, as compared with those of preceding years.

ST. JOHN.—There are many very able and intelligent men who do not think a college education is necessary for the average young man. Certainly there have been many successful business men, and men of broad education and deep research, who did not have the advantage of a college course. In these cases, however, it was generally true that the heredity of the individual was so pronounced that it overcame his environment. To the average youth the benefit of a college course will be the experience he gets from the discipline, the training and knowledge gained by the careful pursuit of his studies.

A. A.—We presume you refer to that part of France where there are large plains called the Landes, which are often flooded in parts with water. Where the water is not deep enough for boats high stilts are worn most of the time. They are used all day long, and are shaped to the size of the leg, the person using them carrying a long pole in his hand to assist him in walking. This pole is described as having a cross-piece on the upper end, like the head of a crutch, and by putting it at a slant on the ground behind him the person on stilts can sit down on it and rest. Women as well as men may often be witnessed perched in this way upon their stilts, the former knitting while they watch their sheep.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 354, Strand, by G. F. CHAMBERS; and printed by WOODFALL and LINDER, 79 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.